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GARDENS ILLUSTRATED

Stylish ideas *for early spring pots*

PLUS

THE INTRICATE BEAUTY OF
Engleheart narcissi

HOW TO CREATE AN
ornamental allotment

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seed sowing kit

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Editor's letter

In this early spring issue of *Gardens Illustrated* we ask five leading designers to choose their favourite plants to grow from seed. For most gardeners the pleasure of growing from seed is unbeatable. 'Each time a speck of something that looks like dust turns earth into a haze of green the seed sower has conjured a tiny, private spring,' writes contributor Mary Keen.

Growing plants from seed offers experimentation on a limited budget, an opportunity to grow plants that are difficult to find and the chance to grow a favourite plant in number. Some plants, such as zinnias and poppies, are simply better when seed grown. Among others, Mary recommends, the specked-leafed chicory *Cichorium intibus* 'Variegata di Castelfranco', a winter salad to eat every day; designer Charlotte Harris chooses the large and glorious poppy, *Papaver somniferum* 'Lauren's Grape', and Arne Maynard selects an elegant sunflower. Isabel Bannerman, who is currently replanting a new garden, notes *Reseda odorata*, the mignonette with a confectionary-like perfume. There are plenty of ideas to inspire.

As the grandson of a seedsman, when designer Stefano Marinaz took on his London allotment his intention was to grow delicious things to eat as well as to reduce his reliance on plastic-wrapped vegetables and fruit. The allotment has evolved to become both productive and ornamental in equal measure, acting as both a trial garden and nursery space for design commissions, as well as a welcome escape from city life. Without the attachments one might have when choosing plants for a garden, it is a beautiful yet experimental, and wonderfully transient space.

This issue also includes the start of a new series of Pots of Style with designer Alison Jenkins. The four-part series (continuing in May, July and November issues) offers a practical guide to creating beautifully planted containers including, this month, a scheme using early flowering woodlanders and diminutive spring bulbs.

I hope you enjoy the issue.

Lucy Bellamy

LUCY BELLAMY, EDITOR

JASON INGRAM

Papaver somniferum 'Lauren's Grape' is one of the designers' favourite seeds to sow, page 66.

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JASON INGRAM

Head gardener Matthew Reese explains the secrets of his spring plantings at Malverleys, page 34.

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SEE PAGE 32

COVER IMAGE

Container display of *Muscari latifolium*, *Scilla* 'Pink Giant', *Viola riviniana* Purpurea Group and *Lunaria annua* 'Chedglow' by Eva Nemeth

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- Join plantsman Jimi Blake on a tour of the great gardens of County Wicklow – page 10
- Save money when you subscribe to the digital edition of *Gardens Illustrated* – page 32
- Save 10% on seeds to sow this spring† – page 112

† Reader offer open to UK residents only.

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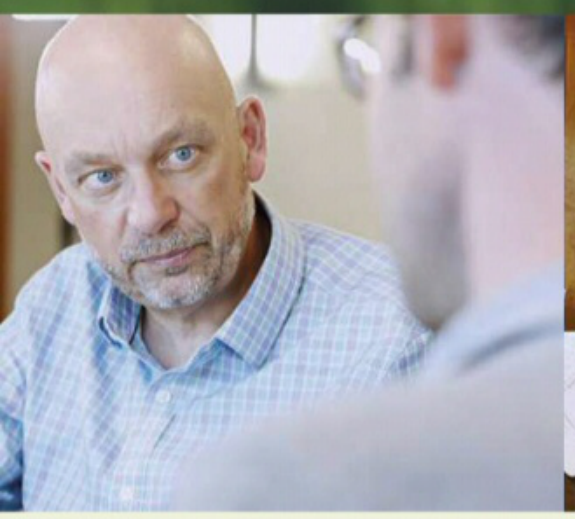

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Alice Pattullo
Alice illustrates Aaron Bertlesen's kitchen gardening column, page 30. *"I enjoy getting a sneak preview of Aaron's column, as it lets me know what veg to look forward to in the coming months."*

EVA NEMETH

Alison Jenkins
Alison begins a new container-planting series, page 44. *"I loved the creative challenge of putting together this series and it was such a delight working with Eva on the photo shoots."*

MATHEW HARRISON, @IPHOTOMAT

John Grimshaw
Yorkshire Arboretum director John looks at the wealth of garden-worthy scillas, page 50. *"This reminded me just how delightful scillas are, and makes me want to order a few thousand for the arboretum."*

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ANDREW MONTGOMERY

James Basson
James lives in the South of France where he runs Scape Design with his wife Helen, specialising in low-maintenance and dry gardens. He is a fervent advocate for creating sustainable landscapes. The winner of four Chelsea Gold medals, he was awarded Best in Show in 2017.

Fergus Garrett
Fergus was appointed head gardener at Great Dixter by Christopher Lloyd in 1993. He is passionate about passing on his knowledge through student programmes at Dixter and worldwide lectures. He was awarded an RHS Associate of Honour in 2008 and an RHS Victoria Medal of Honour in 2019.

Anna Pavord
Anna's books include her bestseller *The Tulip* and most recently *Landskipping*. For 30 years she was *The Independent*'s gardening correspondent. In 2000 the RHS awarded her the Veitch Memorial Medal. She lives and gardens in Dorset.

Dan Pearson
Dan is one of the UK's best-known garden designers, familiar to many through his gardening columns in the *Observer* magazine. Eight of his gardens, including the Tokachi Millennium Forest in Japan, have won awards and he was awarded Best in Show for his garden at Chelsea in 2015.

Sarah Price
Sarah is one of the UK's most sought-after garden designers who gained worldwide recognition for her designs for the 2012 London Olympic Park. She won Gold at Chelsea in 2012 and 2018, and was GMG Garden Columnist of the Year in 2016 for her design series in *Gardens Illustrated*.

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Jimi Blake is a renowned gardener and plantsperson, whose own garden expresses a dynamic approach to planting. This years he's also our plant expert selecting his Plantperson's Favourites each month. He will be accompanied on the tour by host Sophie Piebenga, whose knowledge and love of gardens stems from her training with Kew and the National Trust.

Jimi Blake is the owner and enthusiastic gardener at **Hunting Brook Gardens** in Co Wicklow. The garden is renowned for its modern and inventive plantings, and Jimi's plant choices always excite and delight. This is where you'll start your tour and Jimi will talk you through his approach and seasonal highlights. The tour continues with Jimi taking you on to his sister **June Blake**'s small but painterly garden in Tinode, and then the garden of gardening doyenne Helen Dillon, who has recently transposed her ideas developed over several decades to a new and smaller space. You'll also discover the beautifully meditative garden **Patthana**, and the varied garden of **Ardán**, impressively located on the hilly peninsula overlooking Dublin Bay. Visits to these and further unique and considered, private and award-winning gardens allow guests to meet the owners, garner expert advice and drink in the beauty of contrasting gardens that take you right to the warm heart of the Irish gardening world. Jimi describes the trip as rolling from house party to house party, which together with comfortable accommodation and excellent food will make for a convivial trip full of garden experiences and discoveries.

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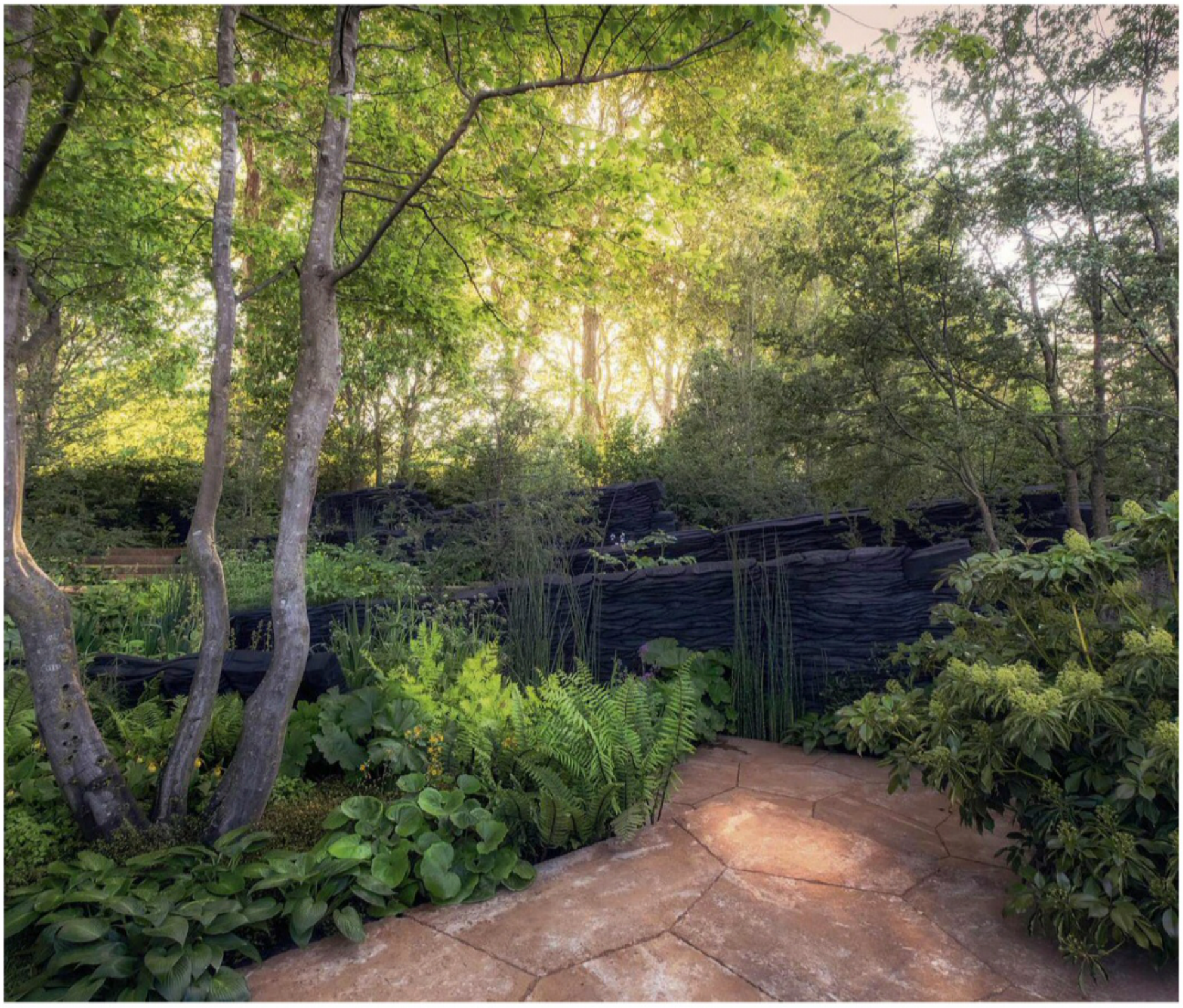
Dig in

What's happening, what's in flower and what to buy this month



NICOLE CUBBIDGE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

The show must go on

The 2021 RHS Chelsea Flower Show, originally scheduled for May this year, has been postponed to the autumn in light of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The show will now take place from 21 -26 September, still at its traditional venue of the Royal Hospital Chelsea. This is the first time the event has been postponed in its 108-year-old history. Taking inspiration from its historic Great Autumn Show and celebrating the best of autumn horticulture., visitors can expect seasonal highlights such as salvias, asters, dahlias and grasses, as well as spectacular autumnal gardens and displays. "I am excited by the opportunity to see what the designers do with another colour palette and the different groups of plants," commented garden writer and broadcaster Matthew Biggs. "It will also give visitors some exciting new ideas about what they can plant to create an impact later in the year." The RHS will contact those who have already bought a ticket for the May show **rhs.org.uk**

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News

COMPILED BY KATIE DUTTON

Scrubs up well

If you feel like sowing something a little different this month, why not try Suttons' Luffa Seeds? The Luffa aegyptiaca *is a fruit similar to the climbing courgette, but when left to mature on the vine, it turns into a luffa sponge, more commonly named a loofah. You can create your own eco-friendly pan scourer or bath luffa by allowing the fruit to turn dark yellow or brown, then submerging it in a bucket of water until the skin can be easily peeled away from the sponge-like texture inside. Give the sponge a few washes to remove any seeds or sap, and then it is ready to get scrubbing. The luffa fruit is also edible when young and tender (up to 15cm) and can be cooked and eaten as you would a courgette. Fifteen seeds cost £2.99 from* ***suttons.co.uk***

ANDREW MONTGOMERY, JONATHAN BUCKLEY

SHARPEN YOUR SKILLS

There is still time to book on to the current series of online courses being run by Cambridge University Botanic Garden. Classes range from garden design and botanical art to garden history and plant identification – all wonderful topics to while away early spring days. The courses take place on Zoom and the lengths vary from half a day to a full day or series of half days, with prices starting at £25 for a half-day course. Both eager amateurs and experienced botanists are encouraged to sign up. The Botanic Garden has also just announced its line up of spring courses; learn about the scientific and cultural significance of colour in plants, and explore a range of edible plant families. See what else is on offer, and book your place at botanic.cam.ac.uk

Dahlia masterpieces

This month sees new additions to Sarah Raven's dazzling selection of dahlias, with the Rossetti Dahlia Collection and *Dahlia* 'Lou Farman', both ready to pot in late March or early April. The former is a picturesque collection of three different dahlias inspired by the Pre-Raphaelite paintings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, while, *Dahlia* 'Lou Farman' (left) is Sarah Raven's most recently bred dahlia, and is named after her long-time business partner and friend. This large, single-flowered dahlia is a great choice for pollinators and grows to 90cm. Available to buy in one or three tubers, from £5.95. **sarahraven.com**

ROBIN WILLIAMS

Picturesque plants

Internationally renowned photographer Robin Williams is the overall winner of the International Garden Photographer of the Year award. Williams has had a prolific career over three decades, specialising in medical photography and photographic education. His winning shot, from the Beauty of Plants category, was taken at the Blue Lotus Water Gardens in Victoria, Australia and shows a sacred lotus *Nelumbo nucifera*. View the other winning photographs at **igpoty.com**

A warm welcome

Enjoy the beauty of early spring magnolias at Borde Hill Garden in West Sussex. Home to stunning specimens, including *Magnolia sargentiana* var. *robusta* (right) and *Magnolia campbellii*, the garden also features the must-see 'Gardiner Grove', planted two years ago with 48 specimens of magnolia tree, each chosen for its scientific and educational interest by RHS vice president Jim Gardiner. Tickets cost £9.95 and must be pre-booked online. Opening times correct at time of print; check government guidelines before travelling. **bordehill.co.uk**

Planting the seed

Nature meets contemporary, functional design in these innovative acorn and avocado vases from Ilex Studio. These beautifully minimal vases allow you to grow a tree at home from scratch. The vase allows an acorn or avocado seed to sit snugly in place, while the glass creates a magnifying effect, so you can see how the roots are developing. In the case of the acorn vase, the oakling can thrive for up to a year in the glass vessel. Once the plant has matured enough, it can be replanted outside, and the vase reused. The perfect gift for an urban dweller, or those wanting to bring nature closer to home. The Avocado Vase costs £35 and the Acorn Vase, £22. ***ilexstudio.com***

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COMPILED BY KATIE DUTTON

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1. Garden Trading Hawkesbury Garden Line, 18m, £10, joules.com **2. The Gardener Work Jacket**, organic selvedge denim, £185, woodandmeadow.com **3. Wooden Garden Box Planter,** small, 19x60x79.5cm, £26.99, gardenesque.com **4. Moleskine Extra Large Kraft Plain Cahier Journals,** set of 3, £15, 020 3322 4788, paperchase.com **5. Coffee Pot Zinc Watering Can,** apple green, 0.9 litres, £9.99, hortology.co.uk **6. Mini Greenhouse Terrarium,** black, £85, 00800 0026 8476, anthropologie.com **7. GroChar Seed Compost,** 8 litres, £7.95, 0345 092 0283, sarahraven.com

1. Copper Watering Can, 1 litre, £59.95, thefuturekept.com **2. Linen Workwear Apron,** burnt sienna, £65, toa.st/uk **3. Ferm Living Tin Box,** set of 3, terrazzo grey, £30, 020 7450 3552, iyouall.com **4. Plantpak Peat Free 8cm Pots,** pack of 48, £8, 01480 774555, marshallsgarden.com **5. Peat-free Coir Compost Block,** makes 11.5 litres, £7, forpeatssake.co.uk **6. Small Seed Planting Ruler,** £9.95, 0345 605 2505, worm.co.uk **7. Copper Mini Spade,** 65x13cm, £69, thefuturekept.com

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TULIPA BIFLORA

I have fallen out of love with tulips to be honest, as they tend to die for me after the first year and many look diseased even in the first year. That said, some species tulips do well for me, such as this one (also known as *Tulipa polychroma*) with its multi-headed white flowers and yellow base to the petals. I adore the sweet scent from the flowers, which is a real bonus at this time of year. It thrives in a well-drained area of the garden in full sun.

Height 10-15cm.
Origin Central Asia, from Crimea to China.
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H5†.
Season March to April.

VISIONS PREMIUM / GAP PHOTOS

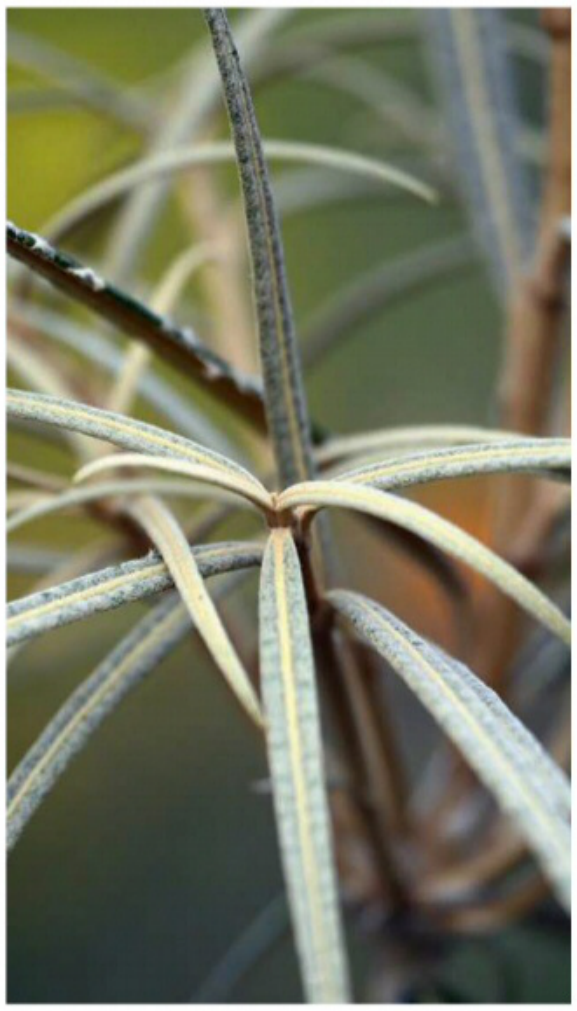
CHARLIE HOPKINSON

March plants

With spring in the air, Jimi chooses a selection of bright bulbs and delicate woodlanders to add colour to borders alongside lush foliage plants

WORDS JIMI BLAKE

Jimi Blake is the owner creator of Hunting Brook Gardens.
huntingbrook.com



RICHARD MURPHY

OLEARIA LACUNOSA

This is an underused New Zealand native. I like the quirky, lance-like leaves, which I use repeatedly throughout one of my perennial borders in much the same that way that I would use another New Zealand native *Pseudopanax crassifolius*. Commonly known as the lancewood tree daisy, *Olearia lacunosa* is a shrub or small tree that won't block light from the perennials if it's pruned to keep its foliage sparse. It is said that its tender but it has survived for me for many years in Hunting Brook. I dream of the day when I can return to New Zealand to see plants such as this growing wild.

Height 1.5-4m.
Origin New Zealand.
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 9a-10b.
Season Year round.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

NARCISSUS 'WHITE LADY'

I feel a new obsession starting for the old-fashioned simple narcissi. I love their simplicity and their elegance and how they bring back memories of when I first started gardening with my mum. This narcissus was raised by the Rev G Engleheart [see page 74] as far back as 1898, and was a popular cut flower for many years. For me it is still one of the most beautiful of all narcissi. At Hunting Brook I have woven it through one of my main borders for flowering in March where it pulls the planting design together with its elegant white petals and yellow cup that also has the most delicious scent.

Height 45cm.
Origin Garden (species Europe).
Conditions Moist but well-drained soil; open sunny position.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Season Spring.

GRAHAM PRENTICE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

JASON INGRAM

CROCUS CHRYSANTHUS 'LADYKILLER'

I am pretty sure that I would have become a full on crocus collector if Hunting Brook's grey squirrels weren't always inviting all their friends round to eat the bulbs. There is nothing more beautiful than a sunny spring day when crocus open up to the sunshine. They are the first flowers that give a real blast of colour in the spring here. *Crocus* 'Ladykiller' with its scented purple-violet flowers edged with white is one of my favourites. I have combined this with *Euphorbia seguieriana* subsp. *niciciana* with its glaucous blue leaves.

Height 10cm.
Origin Garden (species Balkans and Turkey).
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Season February to March.

Astelia fragrans is one of the largest astelias and I consider it the best with its large, strap-like green leaves that often have a reddish midrib

ILLICIUM SIMONSII

Although this rarely grown *Illicium* was discovered in Assam by the English plant collector Charles Simons as far back as 1820, it wasn't introduced into UK cultivation until the 1990s. I grow it on the edge of the woodland valley in dappled shade where it flowers reliably every year and has survived in temperatures down to-10°C. It grows in a columnar shape with scented pale yellow flowers in spring. This is a good choice of evergreen shrub for a small garden and is worth trying to source. *Illicium verum* seedheads are the source of the spice star anise.

Height 3-4m.
Origin Assam, China.
Conditions Acid soil with good drainage; full sun to dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H5.
Season Year round for foliage; spring for flowers.

JENNY LILLY / GAP PHOTOS

RICHARD MURPHY

ASTELIA FRAGRANS

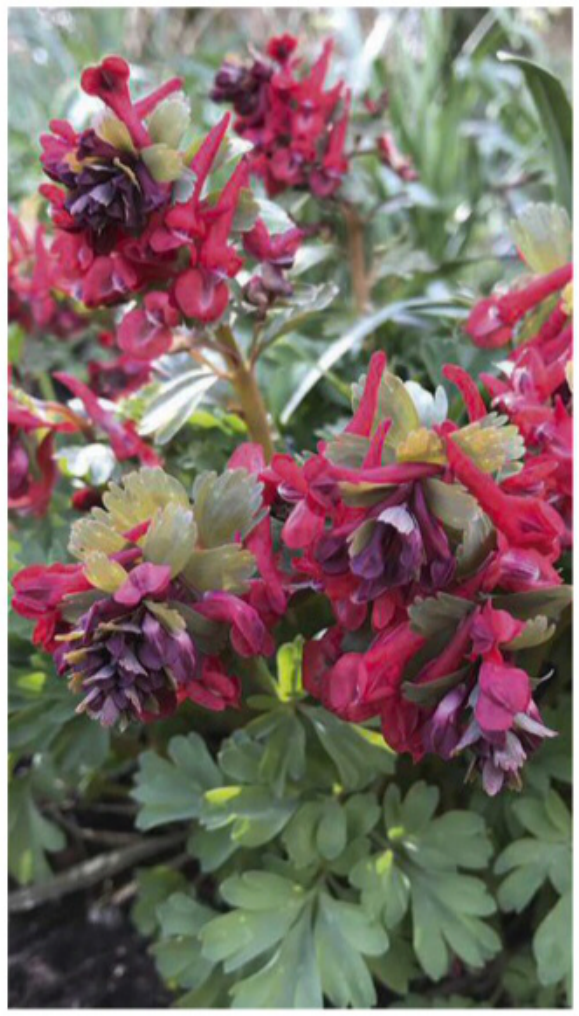
I first saw this while walking through forests in New Zealand where it grew on the forest floor and also as epiphytes in the trees. Commonly known as bush lily or bush flax, it is one of the largest astelias, and I consider it the best with its large, strap-like green leaves that often have a reddish midrib. It flowers in April and May with panicles of scented pale greenish-yellow flowers and bright-orange berries in the autumn. I have it repeated throughout the valley to give evergreen repetition along the paths and also for winter structure. Once established, it will grow successfully in dry shade.

Height 1.5-2m.
Origin New Zealand.
Conditions Moist but well-drained soil; sun or part shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 8b-10a.
Season Year round.

CORYDALIS SOLIDA 'FIRE BIRD'

I have recently started collecting *Corydalis* and especially *Corydalis solida* cultivars, which flower around snowdrop time in Hunting Brook. Most of my *Corydalis solida* collection has come from the wonderful nursery of bulb specialist Janis Ruksans in Latvia. This particular cultivar has bright-red flowers that add a real pop of colour just at a time of year when most flowers are white. If you are growing them with snowdrops, be careful that the snowdrops don't invade their space. The plant goes dormant in summer and re-emerges in spring.

Height 20cm.
Origin Garden.
Conditions Rich, moisture-retentive soil; sun or part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5.
Season Spring.



RICHARD MURPHY

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With their dramatic funky leaves and shy flowers that usually appear under the leaf, podophyllums are a key plant in my new woodland bed

RM FLORAL / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

PODOPHYLLUM DIFFORME 'HUNAN'

I originally purchased this from Yuzawa-Engei Nursery in Japan, which is a family run, mail-order nursery that has amazing woodland plants. With their dramatic, leaves and shy flowers that usually appear under the leaf, podphyllums are a key plant in my new woodland bed. This one has a toad-like appearance with leaves of black, brown and green markings and maroon flowers. I propagate them by moving mature plants to a different location after which new plants emerge in the original area from root cuttings. They are also easy to propagate from seed.

Height 30cm.
Origin China, Taiwan.
Conditions Good, rich, woodland soil; dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 6a-8b.
Season Spring.

TORIE CHUGG

EPIMEDIUM 'ROYAL PURPLE'

I remember a few years ago I was looking through a huge list of epimediums for sale and spotted that this one was the most expensive. I bought one thinking there must be a reason why it was so pricey and there is. I was delighted when it grew with its attractive foliage and its beautiful and large cerise pink-coloured flowers that are held above the foliage. This selection is from the *Epimedium* breeder Koen van Poucke in Belgium. I grow them in rich soil in plenty of light, and propagate them by division at the end of August. AGM*.

Height 45cm.
Origin Garden (species China and east Asia).
Conditions Rich soil that does not dry out; part shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
Season Spring.

RICHARD MURPHY

ERYTHRONIUM 'MINNEHAHA'

Erythronium is one of many different genera that I collect at Hunting Brook. I consider it the most beautiful and elegant of all woodland plants, and this cultivar is especially lovely with its relaxed white petals that dance in the slightest wind. The secret to growing them is lots of leaf mould or garden compost added each year where they are planted. This will keep them in leaf for as long as possible after flowering, which allows the bulb to build up for next year, ensuring lots of new leaves and flowers. I propagate them by division as the leaves turn yellow.

Height 40cm.
Origin Garden (species USA).
Conditions Good, rich, woodland soil; dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 3a-9b.
Season March to April.

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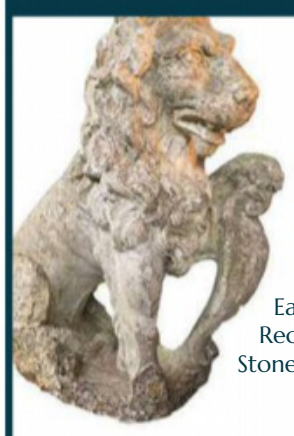
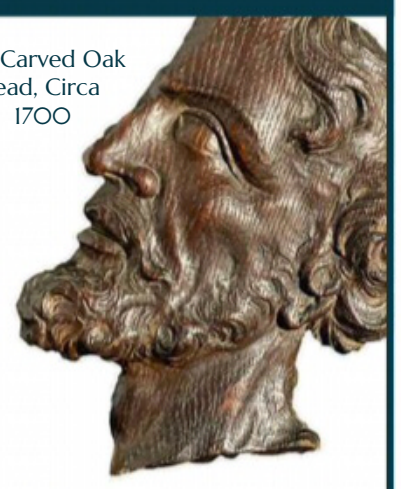


Early 19th Century Reconstituted Stone Lion

English Coalbrookdale Cast Garden Bench, 1883



Carved Oak Head, Circa 1700

Neoclassical Campana Urn on Stand, Circa 1870

Mask of the Dan Tribe, 20th Century

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"Soon after taking it I experienced that 'light-bulb' moment"

When taking longer walks however, some of us can experience skeletal and muscular discomfort. Paul Goddard, 62, a Nordic Walking instructor from Saffron Walden in Essex, swears by a product called Turmeric+ as an effective means of keeping him active.

"I decided to become a Nordic Walking instructor in 2009 and started walking forty to fifty miles a week. Two years ago it became uncomfortable to walk distances that should have been easy for someone of my age and fitness levels. I felt very apprehensive as walking is not only my passion, but my business."

Paul continues: "I started doing some research. I learned that turmeric could be helpful and bought supplements ... and then stumbled upon Turmeric+."

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Since launching the product the company has continually received positive feedback from happy customers, particularly on Trustpilot, the independent online review platform.

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GARDENING TALENT

ERROL FERNANDES

Alongside a busy role as senior gardener at Kenwood House, Errol is working towards involving his local community more in horticulture and its benefits

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

First plant love I was always fascinated by frogs when I was young and there were always lots of ferns in the cool, damp, shady corners where the frogs were often found. Ferns were the first plants that I started to collect; it was all about creating habitat and I soon became more fond of ferns than frogs.

Career inspiration My mum was a florist and keen gardener. She would take us to visit gardens all the time, and to a nursery once a week and let me buy a plant for my area of the garden.

Career change I studied Fine Art, worked briefly as a photographer's assistant, then went on to study Art Psychotherapy and gardening became part of my clinical practice. I eventually found that so much of what I am interested in – working with people, creative expression, being outside – can all be found in one profession as a gardener and I took the opportunity to accept a traineeship at Chelsea Physic Garden.

Influential landscape Ever since I was a child I have been exploring a wasteland in west London – it's an old Victorian dump, frequented by bottle collectors and motocross riders. The layers of broken porcelain, Victorian glass and crushed oyster shell have created a very free-draining substrate. I'm constantly amazed by what I've seen growing there: *Amaranthus*, *Datura* and even the Mexican native *Cobaea scandens*, the cup-and-saucer vine.

Favourite planting style Aesthetic is only one small part of a successful planting. I am always looking for plant communities or combinations that are able to coexist successfully alongside each other, matched in vigour and enjoying similar conditions. Plants grown in this way are naturally low maintenance and there is so much beauty in striking a balance that works.

Challenges facing horticulture More needs to be done to recruit a more diverse cross-section of society into the profession. It has so much to offer as a career but overall there is a huge lack of diversity. It is vital that we address this as an industry.

Looking ahead I hope to do more collaborative horticultural work with communities, people who live with chronic mental health conditions and disadvantaged youth. There is much that these often marginalised groups of people can gain from gardening.

Contact errolreubenfernandes@gmail.com, Instagram @errolreubenfernandes. Look out for details on his workshops focusing on sustainable plant communities.

RHUBARB
GIN
RHUBARB
steering
DAY III

TIDES OF MARCH

From mid March onwards there is no stopping the forward tide of spring. Days are getting longer and warmer, and there is no time to waste in finishing your soil preparation and finalising your plans on which crops to grow. Soon there will be many seeds to sow, both outside and under glass, potatoes to chit and weeds to wage war against. But also take some time to relax with pink gin made with forced rhubarb

WORDS AARON BERTELSEN ILLUSTRATION ALICE PATTULLO

For me, the date that marks the official end of winter is 21 March. As it gets closer, I truly feel I am starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Of course, it does not spell an end to the bad weather but the days are now palpably longer and green shoots are springing up everywhere. Admittedly, many of them are weeds – but it is still growth, and after a long winter I am happy to see any sign of life.

The hibernation for gardeners is well and truly over by now, too. If you took my advice last month to have a rest, you'll be glad because March is one of the busiest months of the year. This is the time to sow seed, both outside and under glass. If you are growing in pots, so much the better – the soil will be warmer and you can move containers around to catch the best of the sun.

This is also the perfect opportunity to get overwintered plants well and truly ready for the season ahead. With longer days and more sunshine (hopefully) you can start to increase the amount of time they are spending outside. If the weather is really warm, you may even need to start watering, especially as new seedlings start to emerge. But do remember that March is a capricious month and the threat of frost remains very real. Keep an eye on the forecast and be ever ready with the hessian or fleece.

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR CROPS

With the previous season's crops coming to an end and the new season only just getting under way, March can lay claim to being the leanest month of the year in the kitchen garden. There may still be some leeks, kale and root vegetables around, and spring cabbages will be coming into their own. This is also the time when you will be glad that you sowed late salad crops and gave them some protection over the winter, whether just with some hessian or in a cold frame.

But there is absolutely no doubt about the main attraction. Forced rhubarb, candy pink and so tender and sweet you could eat it raw, is a fillip for even the most jaded gardener/cook, bringing a burst of colour and bracingly fresh flavour to the kitchen table. I use it to make rhubarb gin – a relatively new discovery for me that I approach with the zeal of the convert. Even better, you can use the soaked rhubarb to make a fool, perfect served alongside some freshly baked shortbread biscuits. ❐

You can find Aaron's recipe for rhubarb gin at gardensillustrated.com/recipes

Jobs for March

The start of the month is the perfect time to finish soil preparation. As a committed digger, my preferred option is to use a rotavator to break up any remaining lumps and bumps, and ensure that the compost I dug in is properly incorporated. On a smaller area, a spade and a rake will do the same job.

Make a plan. It can be difficult to be very strict about crop rotation where space is limited, but you should definitely avoid growing potatoes, brassicas or tomatoes on the same patch of ground for a good four years. One solution is to grow in bags – I find this especially good for salad potatoes, and tomatoes, which will thrive in a sunny spot against a nice heat-retaining wall.

If you have not already started chitting your potatoes, do so now. Put them in a cool place, with plenty of light. The idea is to encourage them to put out good strong shoots so that they have a head start when they are planted.

Sow peas. In the past I did this straight into the ground but I find the plants do better if started off under glass. There is also less chance of the seeds being eaten by mice if you do it this way.

Your newly sharpened, freshly oiled hoe is your best weapon against weeds, and the time to start waging war is now. Provided the weather is reasonably warm and dry, you can leave the weeds on the surface of the soil to wither and rot.

I used to be opposed to horticultural fleece, finding its whiteness jarring in the garden. Now, with the weather becoming ever harder to predict, I've come to see it as an invaluable way of extending the growing season. I use it through March and April and beyond to help maintain the heat in the soil, including in pots and containers. Giving the emerging plants that bit of extra protection makes a big difference.

Tidy up Jerusalem artichokes. Dig up the plants, add some organic matter and replant the roots leaving about 25cm space between each one. Do remember that they are incredibly invasive, so it's best to keep them in a dedicated area. Mine are more or less safely confined at the far end of the fruit cage, where I can admire the flowers in summer, but they can't interfere with anything else.

Get your plant supports in now – pea sticks or netting for peas, wigwams or frames built from bamboo or hazel for climbing beans. It is much better to sow or plant around the supports than the other way round.

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IN BRIEF

What A new English flower garden with mixed border planting in a formal design, influenced by the writings of Christopher Lloyd, Vita Sackville-West and William Robinson.
Where Hampshire.
Size Ten acres.
Soil Variable, mostly stony acid loam with clay.
Climate Temperate. Sheltered from the west, but exposed (with views) to the east.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.

The chequerboard terrace serves as the transition between the house and garden, with plants used to soften the boundaries. Plants grow between the cobblestones and climbers trained against the house bring the garden flowing up the walls. The hard landscaping comes alive in the spring as the plants come into growth. The mixed borders are gardened intensively, with groups of tulips planted between shrubs and waking perennials.

Beyond borders

In the first of a new series Malverleys' head gardener Matthew Reese explains the importance of trees, shrubs and early flowering perennials for creating a dynamic planting scheme to carry the garden throughout the year

WORDS MATTHEW REESE PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM

Tulips herald the arrival of spring in the flower garden at Malverleys. The bulbs for these floral illuminations are bedded out in cold December between sleepy perennials. We also make sure valuable early flowering perennials are included in the plantings. The precocious *Lunaria rediviva* sends up sprays of scented, white flowers tinted with icy-mauve before its foliage has fully developed. Another favourite is the pink-flowered cow parsley, *Chaerophyllum hirsutum* 'Roseum', with delicate, pink umbels on long stems. Forget-me-nots, angelica and woad are early volunteers that naturalise through the plantings, enhancing the displays. Other stalwarts include wallflowers, *Cerinthe* and lupins (for the fresh foliage), which are bedded out to combine with the tulips, but all of this would look flat if not for the trees and shrubs that add much-needed height and presence at this time of year. They play a vital role in providing shelter to protect those early blooms from strong winds that could otherwise cause considerable damage.

It is surprising that this woody element is often forgotten when crafting a garden, left by the wayside in favour of more flowers. Yet these 'bones', as Vita Sackville-West called them, are vital for holding the garden together while creating a sense of permanence and providing an interesting background for the flowers. In spring when herbaceous plants hug the ground like a green blanket, the woody plants punctuate the borders and interrupt what could otherwise be quite a flat display. Strategically placed shrubs and trees can also add a level of interest by concealing the whole of the planting scheme from plain sight, forcing the viewer to move along the border to discover what gems lie beyond the larger plants.

Positioning trees and shrubs in the mixed border needs careful consideration. When laying out borders it is critical to make them wide enough to entertain a few trees and shrubs without having to shoehorn them in. The summation of all the different plants working together will set the tone. We work the different shapes, textures and colours around each other to make the garden exciting. In the Cool Garden, *Cornus alternifolia* 'Argentea' with its pretty, layered habit and dainty leaves decorating the tips of every branch is contrasted with the moody, blue-green foliage of *Juniperus* 'Grey Owl'. Nearby, *Phyllostachys nigra*, a black-caned bamboo, presents a strong, vertical accent, and the vase-shaped *Acer palmatum* 'Shishigashira' draws attention with dark, crinkled foliage on steeply ascending twigs. It is important to have strong shapes, particularly in the spring when many other border plants have yet to attain much height.

To continue turn to page 42

Running down the spine of the walled garden is the Laburnum Walk. The cultivar used is the hybrid *Laburnum* x *watereri* 'Vossii', which has pendent racemes to 60cm long. The plants are trained on simple iron arches and form a tunnel. When in flower it is a Mecca for pollinators, and hums with the sound of bees working the blooms.

The ‘bones’ of a garden are vital for creating a sense of permanence and providing an interesting background for the flowers

Top Behind the glasshouse is an elfin woodland of cloud-pruned hornbeams in flint-edged borders. Beneath the trees, *Rodgersia podophylla* make spectacular displays with their copper leaves, and *Paeonia emodi* form dense clumps with luminous, white flowers. The hornbeams are fed in the spring and clipped twice a year to maintain their shape.

Bottom Trees and shrubs form the bones of the White Garden. They add height and substance in spring when the herbaceous elements are just getting started. Later in the year they add contrast and act as an anchor for the perennials. *Pinus bhutanica* is particularly beautiful with its cascading branches and pendent clusters of needles.

Top The planting palette in the Woodland Garden is quite restrained, and here the colours are much more subdued than elsewhere in the garden to help create the required atmosphere. Shuttlecock ferns mingle with self-sown *Lunaria rediviva*, one of the earliest-flowering perennials. On the opposite side of the York stone path, sweet woodruff carpets the border.

Bottom The borders in the Cool Garden are deep enough to accommodate trees and shrubs into the plantings, including the evergreen *Juniperus* 'Grey Owl', the upright *Acer palmatum* 'Shishigashira' and the delicate *Cornus alternifolia* 'Argentea'. The woody structure they provide is particularly important in the spring when, without it, the garden would look quite flat.

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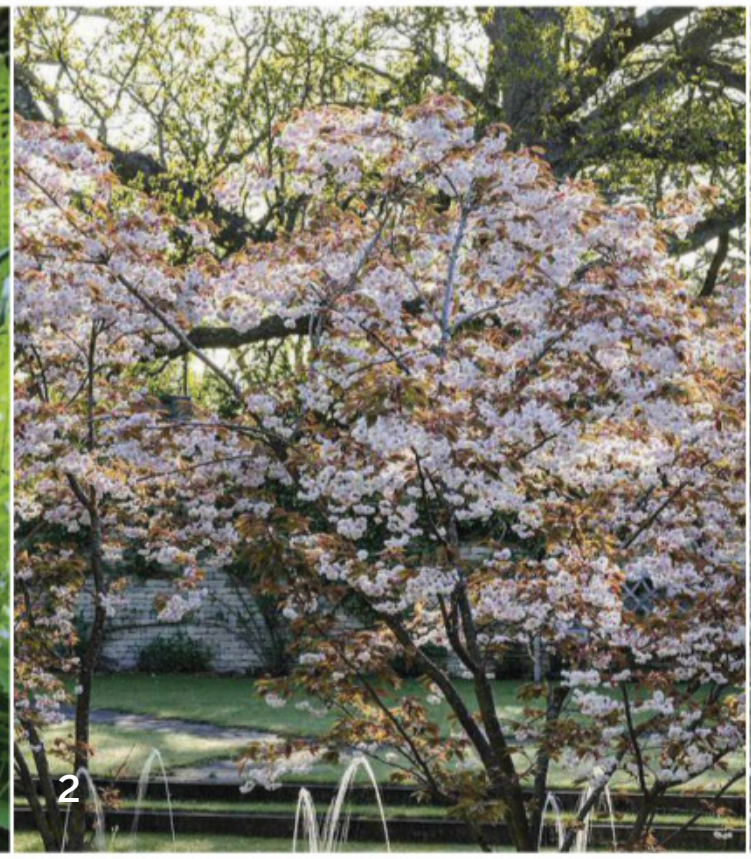
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16 KEY PLANTS

4

1 *Matteuccia struthiopteris* This early fern produces upright funnels of delicate, spring-green fronds from creeping rhizomes. A good coloniser for the woodland garden and associates nicely with woodruff. It can scorch in summer if it becomes too dry. 1m. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b†.

2 *Prunus* 'Fugenzo' A beautiful Japanese cherry introduced into the UK around 1910 by plant hunter Ernest Wilson. It has long, thread-like pedicels that carry plump, pale-pink blossoms below the new bronzy foliage. 10m. AGM. RHS H6.

3 *Juniperus recurva* var. *coxii* Collected in Aranuchal Pradesh by Michael Wickenden from a ridgeline we scaled in 2007. It has pendent, string-like stems covered in sharp, scaly foliage held on (typically) multi-stemmed trees. It makes a wonderful weeping conifer. 25m. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

4 *Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca Fastigiata' A selection of the Atlas cedar with a much slimmer habit than the type. It is quite slow-growing and can be pruned to keep it in proportion to the size of the garden. 15m. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.

5 *Pinus bhutanica* The Bhutan pine has long, pendent, glaucous needles held in bunches of five on ascending branches. The overall habit is very elegant, like a verdant Afghan hound. Prefers a sheltered site on good soil. 25m. RHS H5.

6 *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Silver Queen' Makes a dense shrub or small tree with masses of pretty, variegated, evergreen foliage. It can be clipped into shapes or a hedge. Inconspicuous, purple flowers are produced in the spring, and are sweetly scented. 4m. AGM. RHS H4.

7 *Olea europaea* Makes a small, evergreen tree with glaucous foliage and deeply fissured bark. It has a twiggy habit and should be pruned or clipped in the spring. Best on light soils and a sunny, sheltered location. 3-4m. RHS H4, USDA 8a-10b.

8 *Erica lusitanica* The Portugal heath makes a tall, growing heather with masses of small, white, bell flowers in spring. It has soft-textured foliage and an upright habit. Best on free-draining acidic soils, but will tolerate some alkalinity. 2.5m. AGM. RHS H4.

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9 *Nemophila menziesii* 'Total Eclipse' A sprightly, hardy annual with staring, black flowers edged in white. Where seedlings survive the winter it is quick to flower in the spring. Once grown, it will self-seed reliably on sharp soils or gravel. 20cm. RHS H5.

10 *Galium odoratum* The native sweet woodruff is an exquisite, early flowering perennial. It carpets the ground with little ruffs of foliage held in tiered candelabras and topped off with sprays of miniature, white flowers. 20cm. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

11 *Rodgersia pinnata* 'Cally Salmon' A selection from Cally Gardens in Scotland, chosen for its notable, salmon-pink flowers. The new growth is a delicious shade of bronze. This species is much more drought-tolerant than the widely grown *R. podophylla*. Ideally grown on moist, rich soils. 1m. RHS H6.

12 *Tulipa* 'Black Hero' One of the best of the dark tulips, and quite perennial in the garden at Malverleys. Makes spherical, double blooms on long, strong stems, and looks lovely associated with pale flowers or foliage background. 40cm. RHS H6.

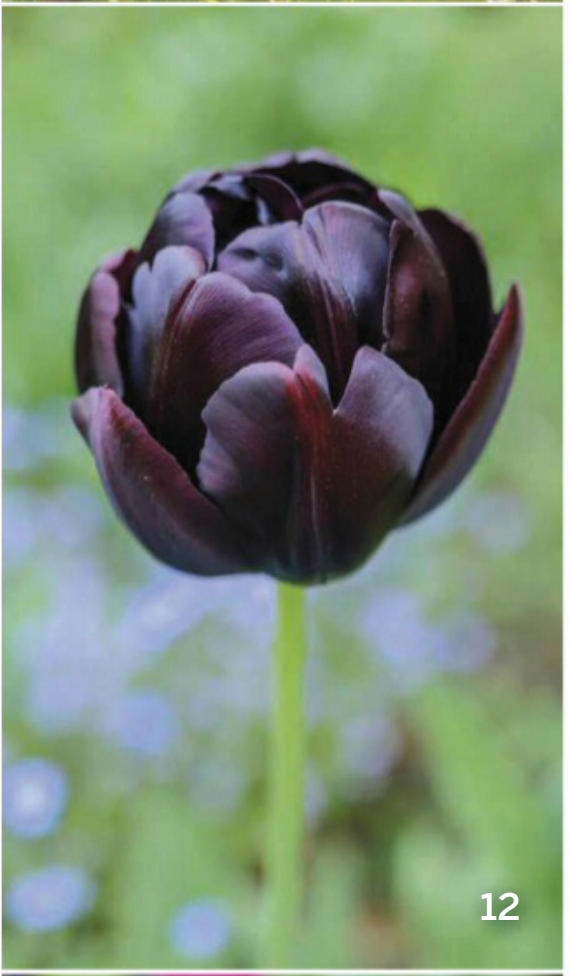
13 *Tulipa* 'Gavota' A triumph-type tulip that is strong-growing and has rain-resistant petals. It is a particularly striking, medieval, maroon and cream-yellow colour combination. We interplant it between perennials in the autumn and winter. 50cm. AGM. RHS H6.

14 *Tulipa* 'Don Quichotte' With shocking, magenta-pink flowers, this is an excellent tulip for contrasting with cooler colours. We combine them with autumn-sown *Cerinthe major* 'Purpurascens' or forget-me-nots. 55cm. AGM. RHS H6.

15 *Astilboides tabularis* Makes a dramatic specimen with huge, disc-like leaves when given good soil and warm, moist summers. The leaf stems are attached in the middle of the leaf. It can scorch in dry soil. 50cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-7b.

16 *Tulipa* 'World's Favourite' A brilliantly coloured tulip with very nicely proportioned, cup-shaped flowers presented on stout stems. It has a slight scent and looks lovely combined with the lush spring growth of perennials in a mixed border. 40cm. AGM. RHS H6.

***Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.**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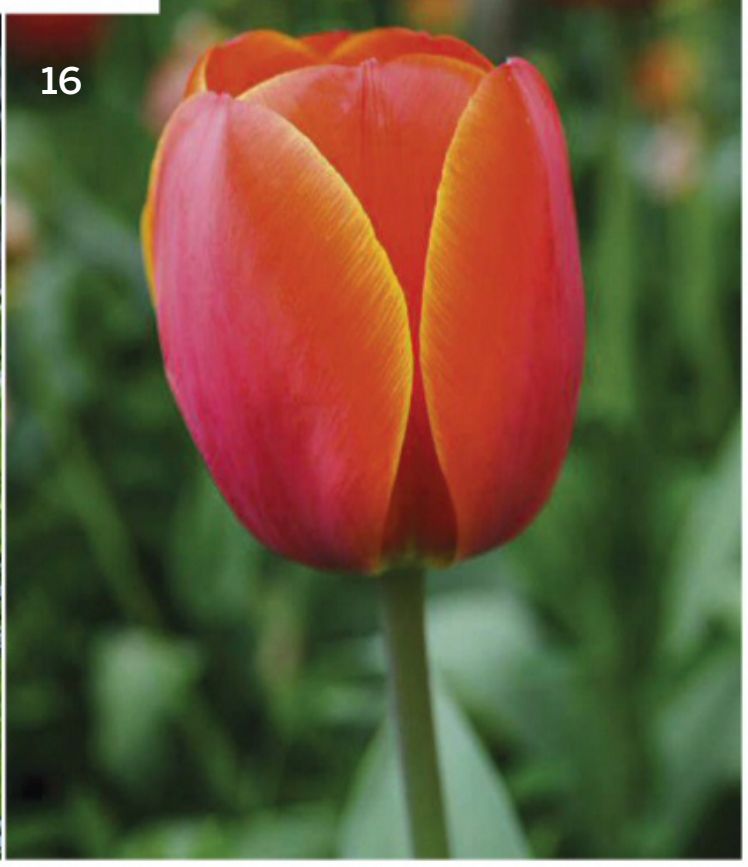
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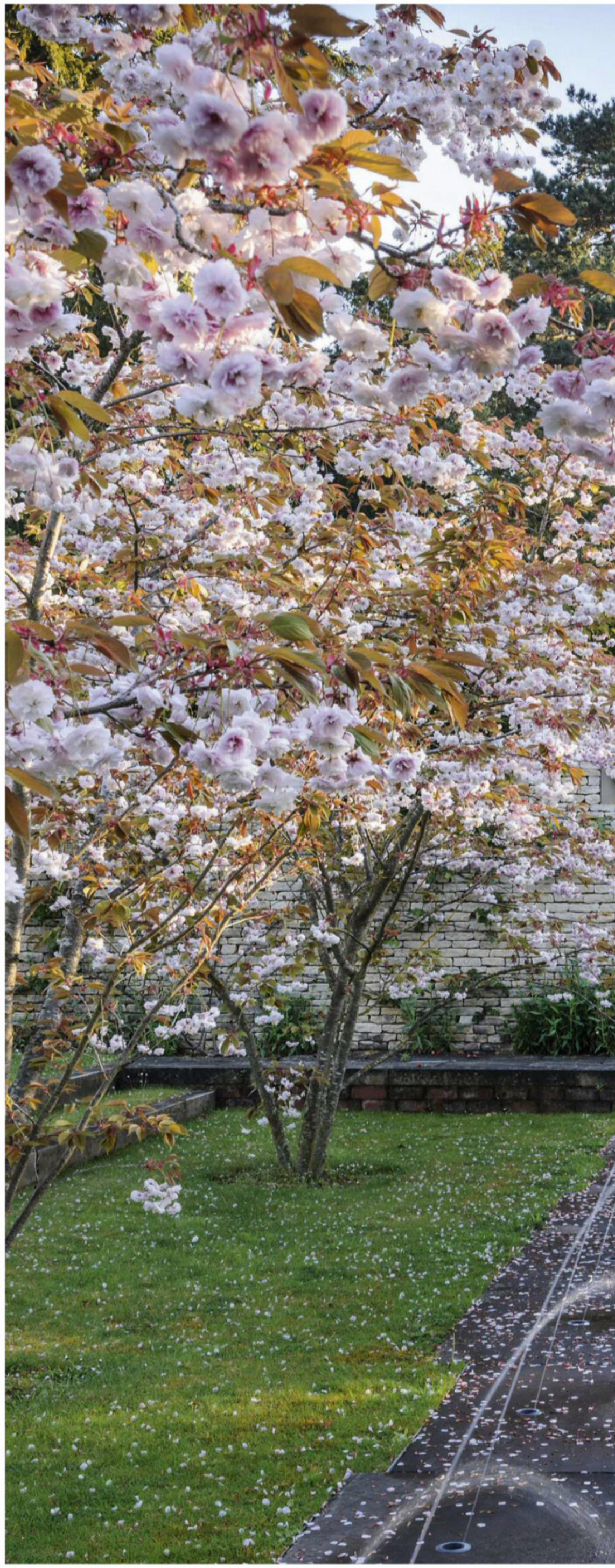
▷ Although some of the finest effects come from trees and shrubs that bloom in spring, it is important not to be completely seduced by their early attire and to remember they must keep up appearances until late summer. Tree peonies are the picture of beauty in spring, but their foliage can shatter in summer and spoil a border prematurely. Cherries and crab apples can also be fleeting, and overplanting can leave a garden sulking for the rest of the year. Plants should earn their keep; this is especially important in small gardens where space is limited. One must be discerning and consider shape, ultimate size, texture, and how the foliage might age, in addition to the flowers. *Prunus* 'Fugenzo' is a fine cherry with shell-pink blooms that shatter into confetti when finished, rather than falling off in blobs. One of the more notable features is the separation of the flowers from the young, copper foliage via exceptionally long pedicels, which give the tree a tiered effect on all the branches. It also has vibrant autumn colour and a good winter outline.

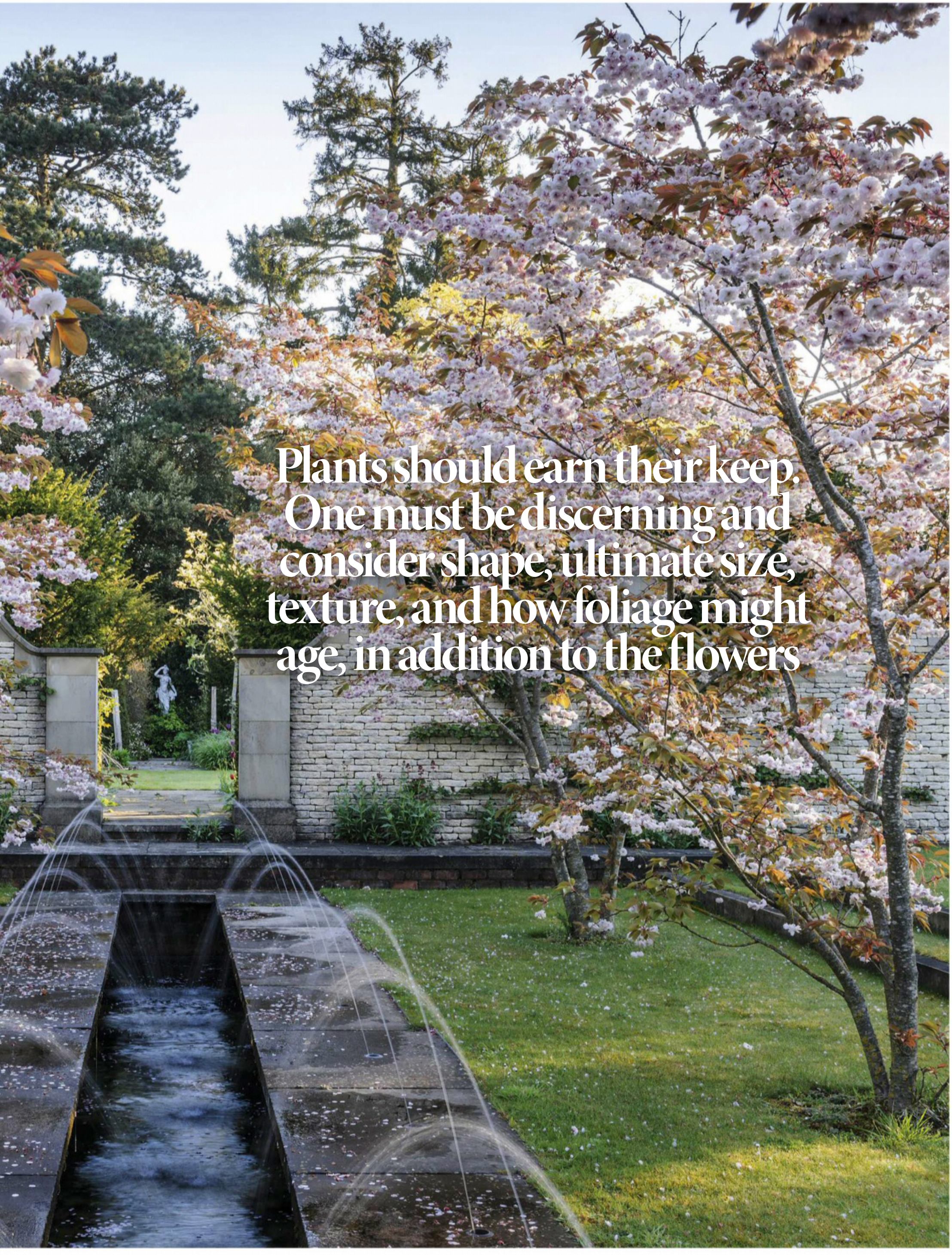
Early flowering perennials will deliver much-appreciated spring colour, but can also tired come the summer, so should be positioned carefully. Some contenders, like the *Lunaria rediviva*, will cope with shade so it can be grown under the skirt of a deciduous shrub where it will be happily disguised for the rest of the summer. Other plants, such as the peonies, will need more comfortable growing space and can be hidden behind larger summer-flowering plants (such as *Veronicastrum* or *Helianthus*).

Laburnum is another good option for late spring but needs careful positioning. We have planted *Laburnum alpinum* in the Flame Borders. It has a more attractive shape with similar, but shorter, racemes than the better-known *L. x watereri* 'Vossii', which can be a bit too limp to accommodate in a border. We grow it en masse in a tunnel, for which it is much more suitable. It's a spectacular, one-hit wonder, and when in flower is a feast for the eyes, ears and nose. The bees adore it and the scent is sweet. If you have the space, cherry walks, peony borders and laburnum tunnels can put on a spectacular spring display, but should not be a blot on the garden landscape for the remainder of the year. □

USEFUL INFORMATION
Address Malverleys Gardens, East End, Hampshire RG20 0AA. **Website** malverleys.co.uk
Open The garden is open by appointment to groups only. Admission £10. Please book online via the website.



In the Cloister Garden, the planting is restricted to *Prunus* 'Fugenzo' (also known as *P.* 'Shirofugen'), roses trained against the Cotswold Stone walls, and self-sown *Centranthus*. The rill is a cantilevered construction, designed to accentuate the sound of the water jets. Above it, flowering cherries are starting to 'link hands'. In addition to the brilliant spring display, they also feature excellent autumn colour.


Plants should earn their keep.
One must be discerning and
consider shape, ultimate size,
texture, and how foliage might
age, in addition to the flowers

Fashionably early

In the first of a new series, designer Alison Jenkins creates three stylish container displays to help brighten the chill of early spring

WORDS ALISON JENKINS PHOTOGRAPHS EVA NEMETH

WOODLAND EDGE

Woodlanders are often early flowerers, rushing to make the most of the available light before the tree canopies fill out and cast too much shade. I had planted up a wide selection of plants and bulbs in individual pots –many more than are shown here – earlier in the year so that I had lots of options for arranging them in different ways for the final arrangement. The plants themselves are quite demure so the shape and character of the pots became key to achieving the look I was after.

How to achieve the look

Container and composition
For this selection of pale and delicate plants using a range of different containers works best. I like the way the metals have different tones of grey but are neutral enough to let the fresh foliage and clean white flowers sing. There's a balance to the tall airy stems of the luzula arching over to bring the eye down in stages to the different levels of the flowers lower down. The low container with the holes to the right of the group was originally part of an old chicken brooder heat lamp that I found in a local reclamation yard. The darker container to its left is a cake tin I bought at a flea market and both were picked up very cheaply. The composition wouldn't have been so effective if the pots had all been the same height or tone.

Cultivation and care
One benefit of having a group of containers is that they can be easily moved around as one starts looking tired. The anemone goes dormant in the summer but if planted out will slowly naturalise under trees. The beesia will continue to flower through the summer and makes lovely seedpods so don't remove the flowered stems. The mukdenia's dissected maple-shaped leaves colour to a brilliant red in autumn. Most will be happy in their pots until the autumn by which time they might prefer to be planted out in the garden in a shady spot as many of them are natural spreaders and may be outgrowing these relatively small pots by then.

Plants

1 ***Beesia calthifolia*** Heart-shaped shiny evergreen leaves with striking veining and starry, white flowers on tall, wiry stems. 30cm. RHS H6†.
2 ***Cardamine trifolia*** Evergreen groundcover perennial. Will tolerate dry shade once established. 15cm. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.
3 ***Mukdenia rossii*** **'Karasuba'** Herbaceous woodlander with attractive deeply cut foliage. 30cm. RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.
4 ***Luzula sylvatica*** Prefers damp soil in sun or part shade. 70cm. RHS H7.
5 ***Anemone nemorosa*** A native woodlander that will naturalise slowly under trees. 20cm. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society †Hardiness ratings given where available.

SPRINGTIME JEWELS

I always like to plant up a few small pots of bulbs in the autumn to overwinter outside or in a cold greenhouse so that I am able to bring these into the house in early spring – they really help to lift the mood. It's an incredible treat to be able to enjoy their vibrancy and detail close up. The height of the lunaria gave a layered feel to the planting with the generous carpeting foliage of the viola as the understorey and the bulbs popping through at mid height.

How to achieve the look

Container and composition
I like the faded tones on this old bread bin. Its soft green tones provide a good foil for the dark foliage of the viola and lunaria. The handles make it really easy to move around and the height means the plants can send deep roots down which enables them to persist for longer. I made holes in the bottom with a metal drill bit. I don't use crocks unless I'm short of compost and need to bulk out a large container – but I do tend to line the container with something, such as old bits of woven landscape fabric or clumps of sheep wool to stop the compost seeping out of the holes. As an alternative you could use an old woollen jumper which would also help to retain moisture.

Cultivation and care
Leave the lunaria to develop seedpods, which you can then collect and sow either in the ground or in pots. They are biennial so sow them early enough in the summer that they make strong growth that year. It will then either flower the following spring or will bulk up its foliage to flower the year after. The muscari and scilla are reliably perennial bulbs so are worth planting out in the garden when they have finished flowering, either in among the viola, which will seed about and form a good groundcover, or among other perennials near the front of a bed. The muscari also looks really good planted through black mondo grass, *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Kokuryu', either in a planter or in the ground.

Plants

1 *Muscari latifolium* Dramatic, two-toned dark- and pale-blue flowers. Forces easily in pots. 15cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.
2 *Scilla* 'Pink Giant' Star-shaped, pale-pink flowers on dark stems. One of the earliest bulbs to appear and shows up well among dark foliage. 15cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.
3 *Viola riviniana* Purpurea Group Heart-shaped, purple-tinged leaves with long-lasting violet flowers. Good groundcover. 10cm. RHS H7.
4 *Lunaria annua* 'Chedglow' Dark, heart-shaped leaves and magenta flowers provide early interest. Seedpods make an attractive late summer feature too. 70cm. RHS H6.

DARK AND SULTRY

I like the weathered patina of rusting surfaces as they provide a good neutral background for foliage and help to give the garden a lived-in feel. I chose quite earthy, dusky-toned plants here to play off the rich, organic shades of rust in the planter and the mild steel wall. The bold foliage of the hellebore, bergenia and euphorbia contrast with the more delicate forms of the leptinella and epimedium. The plants are all evergreen and with careful maintenance should look good long term.

How to achieve the look

Container and composition
I found this cast iron feeding trough at a reclamation yard some years ago. This one is nice and deep, which is particularly helpful if you intend the plants to be in place long term as they are less likely to suffer drought. I've placed the epimedium so that the heart-shaped leaves soften the front edge of the planter. Its bronzy pink tones are similar to that of the hellebore flowers, creating a visual link from the top to the lower level of planting. The dark-red winter leaves of the bergenia will fill out to anchor the corners of the planter and create a strong contrast to the paler tones. The leptinella provides a soft, unusual form of groundcover with its feathery, black-tinged foliage.

Cultivation and care
The hellebore and euphorbia flowers should be cut back when they're over later in the spring to encourage energy into the new growth. The epimedium foliage should be cut back to the base in mid February before the new flowers emerge. Most of these plants are woodlanders, except the euphorbia, so position the planter in part shade, which will also help to reduce the need for watering. As it's a long-term planting scheme, use seaweed feed at regular intervals to keep the nutrient levels up. You could extend the season by adding some summer-flowering bulbs into the mix. Both *Allium* 'Caméléon' and *Triteleia* 'Foxy' would work well with the other plants in this in this composition.

Plants

1 *Euphorbia characias* 'Blue Wonder' Evergreen perennial with silvery, architectural foliage and distinctive early flowers. 75cm. RHS H4.
2 *Leptinella squalida* 'Platt's Black' A ground-hugging, semi-evergreen perennial with unusual black feathery leaves. 5cm. RHS H5, USDA 4a-10b.
3 *Epimedium grandiflorum* 'Rose Queen' Deep-pink flowers hover above attractive foliage. Good for groundcover. 25cm. RHS H5.
4 *Bergenia* 'Overture' Leathery, oval leaves turn dark red with winter cold. Magenta flowers. 40cm. RHS H6
5 *Helleborus* 'Ivory Prince' Flushed pink and cream, out-facing flowers with dark red stems. 35cm. RHS H5.

SCILLA

Grown under trees or naturalised in grass in these unassuming, flowering bulbs bring a wash of colour to early spring

WORDS JOHN GRIMSHAW PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM

Scilla bithynica
Scilla bithynica flowers in March and early April, spreads very rapidly to create a soft-blue wash , ideal under deciduous trees and shrubs where there is space for it to spread. 15cm. AGM*. RHS H6, USDA 6a-8b†.

Among the abundant whites and yellows of early spring a pop of other colours is welcome, and none more than blue. Here the genus *Scilla* comes into its own, briefly spangling the ground with its six-petalled flowers in shades from glacier- to Prussian blue, varying sometimes to white or pink, occasionally almost mauve. None lasts very long in flower, and most would not draw a crowd, but as highlights in the garden, or as gems in a pot, they are delightful.

The name *Scilla* has been in use for hundreds of years, originally being applied to the Mediterranean sea squill, now *Urginea maritima*, a tender, autumn-flowering bulb with long spikes of white flowers, but Linnaeus brought this together with an assortment of smaller, blue-flowered plants more representative of what we call *Scilla* today. The standard English name is squill, but it's one that you don't often hear in use; most gardeners call them scillas.

The genus has been used over the centuries as a bit of a ragbag, and its constituents have always been in flux. As an example, gardeners may be surprised that the plants they've always known as *Chionodoxa*, or glory of the snow, have recently been included in *Scilla*, but the distinctions were always slight and they hybridise very easily with *Scilla bifolia*, the type species of the genus, so they have been united with it. Others, more disparate, now appear in segregate genera accepted to varying degrees by botanists; the autumn-flowering native *Scilla autumnalis* is placed in the genus *Prospero*, for example, and African former scillas are in *Ledebouria* and *Merwilla*.

The plants grown as *Scilla* today come from a wide a wide swathe of Europe and west Asia from southern Spain to the Caucasian forests in Iran. Some, such as the large *S. peruviana* despite its misleading name, are from the Mediterranean lowlands and like a hot summer. Its rich-blue, starry flowers start opening as the flower stem is nestled within the rosette of leaves, but the stem elongates as flowering progresses, as it does in most scillas. Most of the other species are from alpine or woodland habitats. Some years ago, while driving across Germany in March, I was surprised to find the tiny blue stars of *S. bifolia* in a service station hedgerow, but its range covers suitable habitats across Europe from Portugal to Turkey, but not Britain, though it makes itself very happy here. There are beautiful swathes of it under the trees at Hergest Croft Gardens in Herefordshire.

As garden plants, scillas are best allowed to naturalise. Perhaps the classic species is *S. siberica*, with nodding, rich-blue flowers in March – the name is a little misleading as it comes from no further east than the Caucasus. When happy it will self-sow to create a great carpet – the best I have ever seen were in Massachusetts in northeastern USA – ideal in thin grass or under deciduous trees and shrubs. Another that rapidly spreads in the same conditions is *S. bithynica*, with pretty, starry, soft-blue flowers but large, coarse foliage that can smother other things; only plant it if you have plenty of space. Much more staid, and one of my favourites, is *Scilla* 'Pink Giant' (formerly *Chionodoxa*) with large, solidly pink flowers that really make a show in the garden or in a pot. One of the most useful features of all the small scillas is that they are truly ephemeral, popping up to flower and often completing their entire growth cycle in less than two months before discretely melting away as other plants rise above them. ❐

• Author John Grimshaw is director at The Yorkshire Arboretum.
His recommendations for the best scillas can be found over the next five pages.

PLANT PROFILE

What Small, bulbous plants, usually with blue flowers and strap-shaped, glossy green leaves, now including the former genus *Chionodoxa*.
Origins About 45 species from North Africa, through Iberia to the Caucasus, usually at higher elevations, although some occur at sea level.
Season From February to May: in the wild they often emerge from melting snow.
Size From 5-30cm, usually expanding in size as flowering progresses.
Conditions Sun during the growing season; well-drained soil.
Hardiness Mostly RHS H6, with a few Mediterranean species in RHS H4. Many are suitable for gardens in USDA hardiness zones 2a to 8b, with a few only suitable for zones 4a to 8b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

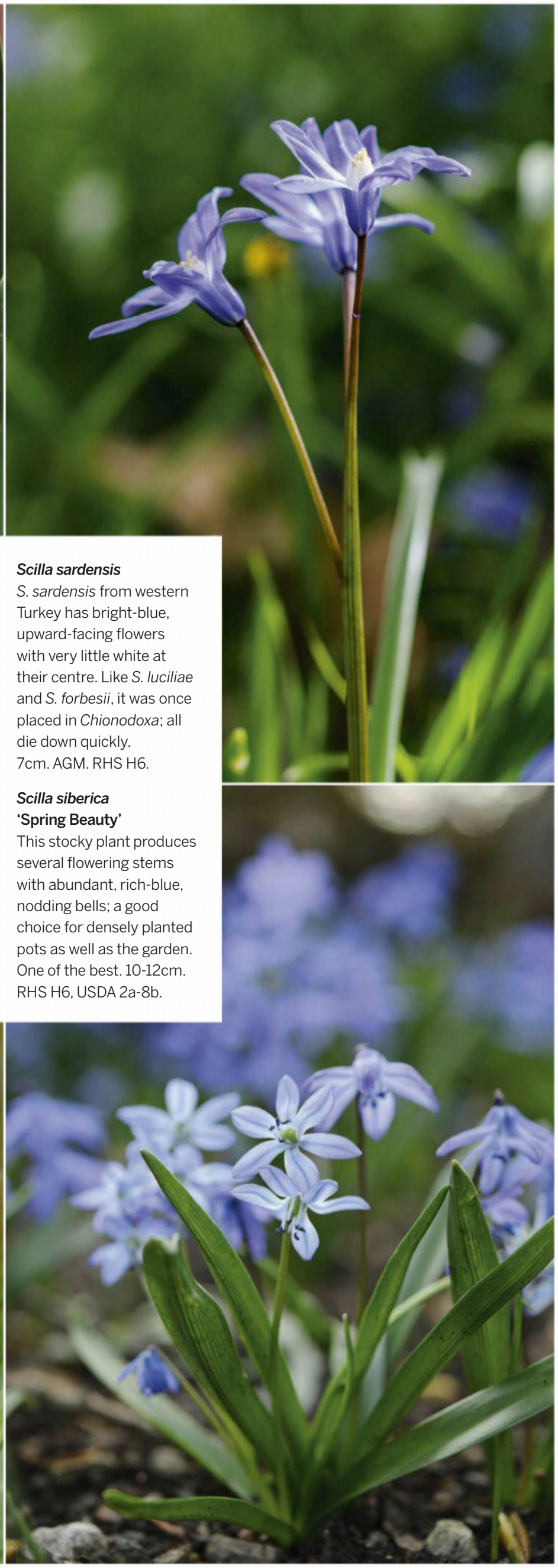
Scilla luciliae
In the wild in western Turkey, the starry flowers of *S. luciliae* open in alpine meadows as snow melts, giving it the name glory of the snow. In the garden, it gives a brief, bright pop of blue, close to the ground. 5cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

ELENA NOEVA / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Scilla bifolia
The widespread *S. bifolia* has tiny, starry flowers in blue, pink or white. Enjoy it close up in pots, but perhaps best planted in large swathes in the garden. It seldom reaches more than 7.5cm but often starts flowering when much shorter. 7.5cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

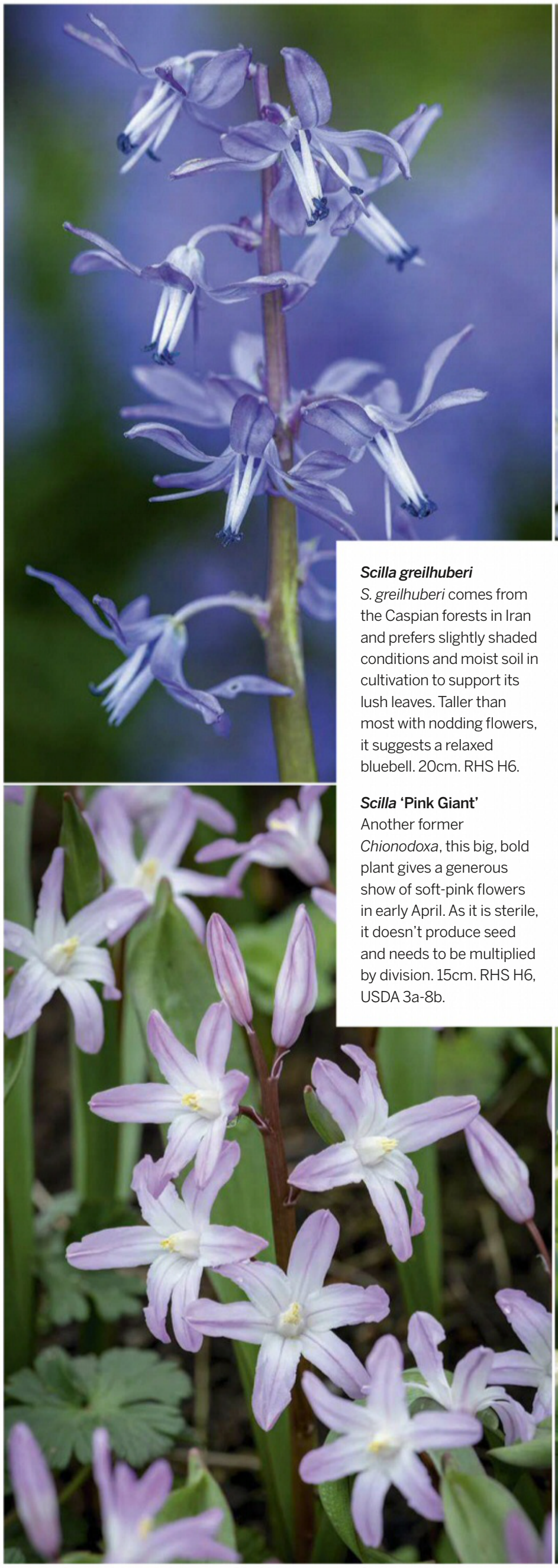
Scilla peruviana
A misunderstanding about its origin led to this handsome Mediterranean plant being named *S. peruviana*. Grow it in full sun in a sheltered place for flowers in late spring and early summer. 20cm. RHS H4.

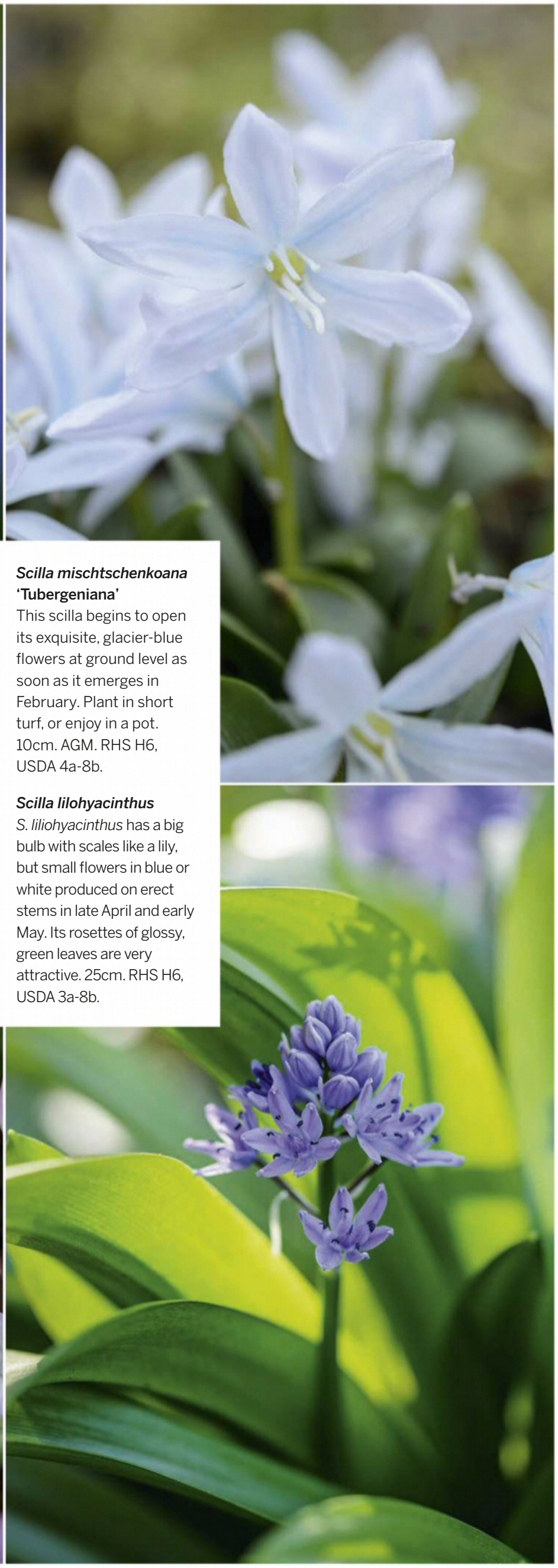
Scilla* x *allenii
S. bifolia often hybridises with the former *Chionodoxa* species, giving intermediates. Formerly called x *Chionoscilla,* since the genera were united such plants are known as *Scilla* x *allenii*. 12.5cm. RHS H6.



Scilla sardensis
S. sardensis from western Turkey has bright-blue, upward-facing flowers with very little white at their centre. Like *S. luciliae* and *S. forbesii*, it was once placed in *Chionodoxa*; all die down quickly. 7cm. AGM. RHS H6.

***Scilla siberica* 'Spring Beauty'**
This stocky plant produces several flowering stems with abundant, rich-blue, nodding bells; a good choice for densely planted pots as well as the garden. One of the best. 10-12cm. RHS H6, USDA 2a-8b.





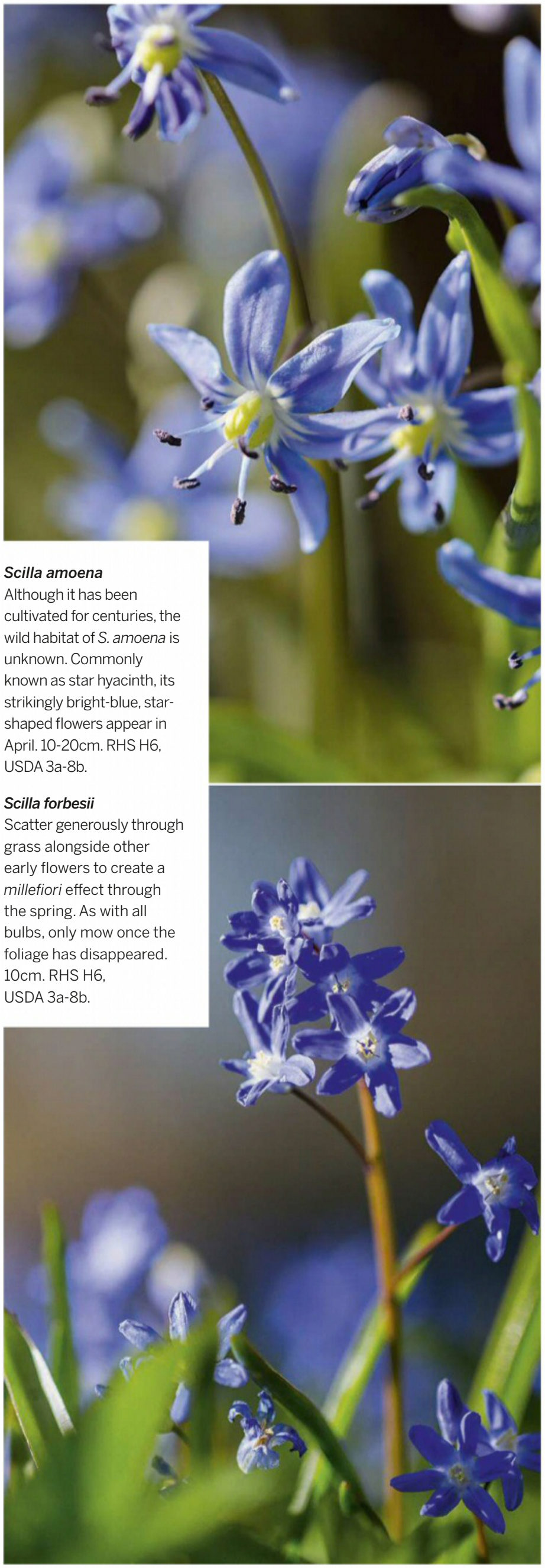
Scilla greilhuberi
S. greilhuberi comes from the Caspian forests in Iran and prefers slightly shaded conditions and moist soil in cultivation to support its lush leaves. Taller than most with nodding flowers, it suggests a relaxed bluebell. 20cm. RHS H6.

***Scilla* 'Pink Giant'**
Another former *Chionodoxa*, this big, bold plant gives a generous show of soft-pink flowers in early April. As it is sterile, it doesn't produce seed and needs to be multiplied by division. 15cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

***Scilla mischtschenkoana* 'Tubergeniana'**
This scilla begins to open its exquisite, glacier-blue flowers at ground level as soon as it emerges in February. Plant in short turf, or enjoy in a pot. 10cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

Scilla lilohyacinthus
S. liliohyacinthus has a big bulb with scales like a lily, but small flowers in blue or white produced on erect stems in late April and early May. Its rosettes of glossy, green leaves are very attractive. 25cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS X2



Scilla amoena
Although it has been cultivated for centuries, the wild habitat of *S. amoena* is unknown. Commonly known as star hyacinth, its strikingly bright-blue, star-shaped flowers appear in April. 10-20cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

Scilla forbesii
Scatter generously through grass alongside other early flowers to create a *millefiori* effect through the spring. As with all bulbs, only mow once the foliage has disappeared. 10cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

STEFFEN HAUSER / BOTANIKFOTO . BLICKWINKEL / BOTH ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Cultivation

For a big, bold effect, some scillas can be planted densely in grass to create a blue river, but I prefer to see them in what Arabella Lennox-Boyd calls *millefiori* plantings, creating a changing spring carpet of 'a thousand flowers' in short grass under shrubs and trees. Choosing species carefully makes it possible to have a long season, starting with the icy pallor of *S. mischtschenkoana* 'Tubergeniana' in February, opening at ground level with *Crocus tommasinianus* before the stems elongate to their full height of 10cm, and continuing well into May with the upright spikes of *S. litardierei*. In one of my favourite plantings, at Colesbourne Park in Gloucestershire, *S. luciliae* is sprinkled through short grass full of native primroses (*Primula vulgaris*), wood anemones (*Anemone nemorosa*) and celandines (*Ficaria verna*), creating a mesmerising effect for just a few days each spring.

For naturalising, scillas should be planted as generously as possible, flung out to plant where they fall, in hundreds or thousands. Ideally the tip of the bulbs should be about 2.5cm below the surface, but there's no point in precision with such things. Scillas have the capability to adjust their depth in the soil by means of contractile roots that pull them deeper if necessary. The next generation of seedlings will suit themselves and flower in three or four years, so the patch should spread quite quickly in good conditions.

As with most bulbs, scillas don't thrive in heavy clay, or permanently wet places; well-drained soil of any type will suit them well. They should have plenty of light in the growing season, so avoid planting them under evergreens.

To really make a show when potting scillas, pack them densely in the pot as the display will not last long, especially if brought inside. Don't try to force them too much; plunge the pots outside and only bring them in when the noses are showing – they will rapidly develop and come into flower with a slight increase in temperature. Afterwards place them back outside and continue to feed and water them for the rest of the growing season. In a mixed planting, use them as the top layer of the 'lasagne' with larger and later-flowering bulbs below.

Where to see and buy

- **Avon Bulbs**
  Burnt House Farm,
  Middle Lambrook,
  South Petherton,
  Somerset TA13 5HE.
  Tel 01460 242177,
  avonbulbs.co.uk
- **Beth Chatto Nurseries**
  Elmstead Market,
  Colchester, Essex CO7 7DB.
  Tel 01206 822007,
  bethchatto.co.uk
- **Cotswold Garden Flowers**
  Sands Lane,
  Badsey, Evesham,
  Worcestershire WR11 7EZ.
  Tel 01386 422829,
  cotswoldgardenflowers.co.uk
- **Hergest Croft Gardens**
  Hergest Estate Office,
  Ridgebourne Road, Kington,
  Herefordshire HR5 3EG.
  Tel 01544 230160,
  hergest.co.uk
- **Kevock Garden Plants**
  Kevock Road, Lasswade,
  Midlothian EH18 1HX.
  Tel 0131 454 0660,
  kevockgarden.co.uk
- **P de Jager & Sons**
  Church Farm, Ulcombe,
  Maidstone, Kent ME17 1DN.
  Tel 01622 840229,
  dejager.co.uk
- **RV Roger**
  The Nurseries, Malton
  Road, Pickering, North
  Yorkshire YO18 7JW.
  Tel 01751 472226,
  rvroger.co.uk
- **Tinnisburn Plants***
  Upper Millsteads,
  Canonbie,
  Dumfriesshire DG14 0RY.
  Tel 01387 371453,
  tinnisburn.co.uk

*National Collection holder

TO THE MANOR ADORNED

A hidden delight of a garden in the grounds of a secluded, Grade-I listed Cotswolds manor house is a treasure trove of hanging woodland, grassy riverside glades, crisp topiary and informal wildflower plantings

WORDS STEPHANIE MAHON
PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM

IN BRIEF

What Private garden.
Where Gloucestershire.
Size Four acres.
Soil Stony, thin and free-draining.
Climate Warm summers and cool winters.
Hardiness zone USDA 8.

Masses of primroses with pale, striped squill (*Puschkinia scilloides*) and blue scillas light up the river bank under the trees in early spring. The view of the floating garden on the water and vistas of the lawn and borders can be best enjoyed from here.

Deep in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds, an ancient manor house of many gables has nestled beside the River Coln since the late 16th century, when it was built by a wealthy wool merchant.

The best view, of rolling lawn and ribbons of planting easing their way down to the riverside, can be had from the sunny, south-facing, reclaimed York stone terrace by the house. In spring, the terrace comes to life with myriad miniature daffodils and delicate early irises; prostrate rosemary flows from copper pots and blue muscari bursts forth between paving cracks. A line of *Tulipa* 'Negrita' along the edge brings a pop of warm purple to cool, bright days.

As with many classic English gardens, topiary is a notable feature, grounding the planting. On the lower terrace, an old stone sundial is protected by four small domes of firethorn and four large outer golden yews. Lower down, two standard weeping pears, *Pyrus salicifolia* 'Pendula', stand sentinel where the terrace borders meet the lawn, keeping an eye on a gaggle of bright-pink tulips below. Beyond, clipped yew and box shapes tower over everything, drawing the eye up and out to the rest of the garden. ▷

To continue turn to page 62

Above Pink tulips line the steps from the terraces down to the lawn, beneath the cool grey-green foliage of a pair of weeping pears (*Pyrus salicifolia* 'Pendula') clipped into mushroom standards. *Alchemilla mollis* threads its way between the pavers.

Below In the walled garden, the weathered timber pergolas that line two sides of the walkway are covered in climbing roses and clematis. The sunken central section in the quatrefoil shape features a large, octagonal metal planter.

Above The summer house and its sun-filled terrace are the final elements of formality before the garden segues into a more naturalised feel surrounded by swathes of daffodils and other spring bulbs that extend down from the bank of woodland behind.

Below The undulating wildflower walk, planted with thousands of *Fritillaria meleagris* and tulips in shades of dark burgundy, snakes under an *Acer palmatum* 'Atropurpureum', splendid in its deep-purple spring regalia.

The terrace by the house has stone troughs of bulbs and flowering rosemary, with early irises and muscari between the pavers, and tulips lining the wall. The garden features topiary including four golden yews and large, ancient box and yew forms clipped into amorphous shapes.

▷ The borders that emanate from the terrace ripple away in waves rather than strict straight lines, softening the background structure of terraces and walls. These serpentine beds are packed with shrubs and perennials, with a succession of year-round interest. They edge a sumptuous lawn that slopes gently down to the river bank, and breezy clusters of bobbing daffodils.

Across the fast-flowing water, on the opposite bank, stands a stately stone summerhouse with a tented hip roof. It was built exactly in line with the door of the house and acts as a focal point at the end of the garden, as well as a good place to enjoy summer garden parties. A high ridge rears up behind it, creating a steep woodland that encloses the garden.

It is on this far bank of the river that the summerhouse terrace gives way to a series of groves and copses, with vast swathes of spring-flowering bulbs lighting up the shade under the trees. There is a tapestry of snowdrops and winter aconites (*Eranthis hyemalis*) to start the year, followed by broad drifts of common primroses and striped squill (*Puschkinia scilloides*), and then a carpet of pheasant's eye daffodils. Snake's head fritillaries (*Fritillaria meleagris*), ▷

The best view, of rolling lawn and ribbons of planting easing their way down to the riverside, can be had from the sunny, south-facing, terrace by the house

12 SPRING PLANTS

1 *Tulipa* 'Flaming Purissima'
A creamy-coloured base to the bowl-shaped flowers flushes to a rosy-pink at the top, with a rich raspberry tint inside. Strong stems are good for cut flowers. 35cm. RHS H6†.

2 *Fritillaria meleagris*
Chequered maroon-and-pink, bell-shaped flowers dangle from fine stems. Prefers moist, rich soils where it will self-seed. 30cm. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

3 *Tulipa* 'Fancy Frills'
Frothy, fringed tulip in white blending to rose-pink up the petals. 50cm. AGM. RHS H6.

4 *Primula elatior*
Our native oxlip with a rosette of oblong leaves and a flower stem topped by a whorl of flowers in creamy yellow with a darker yellow eye. Prefers damper conditions. 30cm. AGM. RHS H6.

5 *Amelanchier* x *lamarckii*
Small tree with slender, arching branches adorned with early white, star-shaped blossom that opens just ahead of the coppery-pink young leaves. 10m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

6 *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost'
Striking, heart-shaped silver leaves veined and edged in green with sprays of small, blue, forget-me-not-like flowers are a highlight in spring. 50cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

7 *Tulipa* 'Black Parrot'
Glamorous, parrot-type tulip with fringed petals in almost-black. 50cm. AGM. RHS H6.

8 *Puschkinia scilloides*
The striped squill is an early spring delight with pretty, palest-blue, star-shaped flowers, each with a darker-blue central stripe. Best grown in drifts under deciduous trees or in a border. 10cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

9 *Malus* 'Rudolph'
Lovely choice of crab apple with showy, red-pink blossom in spring, and added bonus of good autumn leaf colour and reddish-yellow fruits. 7m. RHS H6.

10 *Muscari armeniacum* 'Dark Eyes'
Clump-forming grape hyacinth with tight clusters of bell-shaped flowers in dark blue edged in white. 15cm. RHS H6,

11 *Tulipa* 'China Pink'
Lily-flowering tulip with small flowers on tall stems in soft pink, graduating to a darker pink in the centre of each petal. Complemented by greyish foliage. 50cm. AGM. RHS H6.

12 *Spiraea* 'Arguta'
Deciduous shrub with arching sprays covered in clusters of white flowers and fresh-green leaves. 2.5m. AGM. RHS H6.

***Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.**

▷ and countless tulips in shades of cream, pink and maroon, jostle under specimen acers and blossoming cherry trees.

These naturalised schemes are what successfully link the more formal elements of the garden near the house to the surrounding land, blending the edges of the contrasting areas, from the cultivated borders and formal lawn to the wilder riverside and woodland. As you make your way around, you find unexpected spaces to explore and surprises round every corner, through gates or sheltering beyond shrubby camouflage: a secret, traditional walled garden with an oak pergola harbouring a dramatic, sunken quatrefoil at its centre; a circular garden ringed with low yew hedging, featuring a pink granite memorial surrounded by a sea of white iris; a small wooden bridge over the water leading to a floating 'barge' bog garden.

This is a masterclass in design and planting to create delight in all who tread its paths. □

The old stone sundial is flanked by clipped *Pyracantha* domes. It lines up perfectly along the axis from the back door, down the steps and lawn, and across the river to the extraordinary summerhouse.

DESIGNERS' FAVOURITE

SEEDS TO SOW NOW

With thoughts turning to the growing season, we ask five leading garden designers to pick their favourite plants to sow from seed. Some are old hands, while others are newly receptive to the opportunities seed sowing provides for variety and interest. Some choose seeds that germinate easily, while others are open to the challenges of those that require more patience. But all have one thing in common: our designers are all captivated by the magic of growing something from seed, and a sense of wonder at the life that materialises from a tiny dot of nothingness.

Charlotte Harris co-founded Harris Bugg Studio with Hugo Bugg in 2017. They are currently working on the Kitchen Garden at RHS Garden Bridgewater.
"For me, growing from seed is both mindful and magical, setting the intention to observe, nurture, and step back from the immediacy and hectic nature of life to reconnect with the seemingly small things that make a big difference. It also allows for experimentation with hard-to-find or unusual or heritage varieties."
harrisbugg.com

Charlotte Harris

1 *Anchusa azurea* Hugo and I both love *Anchusa* and have used it at RHS Chelsea, in the Kitchen Garden at RHS Bridgewater, and I grow it at home. Flowering a splendidly vibrant blue, it is a long-lasting looker in the May to July borders, lovely as a cut flower and the petals are edible in salads and drinks. Easy to grow from seed. Look for cultivars 'Dropmore' (pictured) or 'Loddon Royalist'. H 90cm, S 45cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b†.

2 *Panicum miliaceum* 'Violaceum' This annual grass is a great performer, looking good from June through to October. Handsome, deep-purple tipped seedheads provide valuable nectar and pollen, and are also popular with small birds. Ideal for filling gaps in beds to give movement and colour. Also good in pots – it looks spectacular with dahlias, and we use it in flower arrangements at home too. H 90cm, S 30cm.

3 *Lunaria annua* 'Corfu Blue' Billowing purple and white through the headstones and woodland edges of my nearby Victorian cemetery, *Lunaria annua* is a May/June highlight. 'Corfu Blue' is an unusual cultivar of the common honesty, with bluer flowers and purple stems, and is popular with pollinators. Happy in sun or part shade. The papery, round seedheads are as attractive as the flowers. H 80cm, S 50cm. AGM*.

4 *Papaver somniferum* 'Lauren's Grape' Large, gloriously sultry blooms of plum-purple are held above glaucous foliage. These opium poppies deliver a beguiling combination of delicate, papery petals and a bold punch of colour, so mouthwatering from June to August. Thereafter, enjoy the architectural qualities of the seedpods both in the garden and in a vase. H 90cm, S 45cm.

5 *Seseli gummiferum* Derry Watkins introduced us to this stunning umbel on a visit to her Special Plants Nursery. Flowers start pale pink, turning to white and lasting June to September. The evergreen, grey-green, dissected foliage is also very elegant. Needs sun and drainage. The perfect addition to a gravel garden and a good cut flower. H 80cm, S40cm. USDA 5a-9b.

6 *Eschscholzia californica* 'Orange King' Can anyone resist the dramatic tangerine pop of California poppies? Perfect for weaving through sunny spots, seeding through gravel or softening hard surfaces such as cracks in paving, and also good in pots. I love them because they are so joyous and assiduous at colonising and brightening up even the grittiest, poorest of soils with a profusion of colour from June right through to September. H 45cm, S 20cm.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

PORTRAIT CHRISTA HOLKA; 1 ROBERT MABIC / GAP PHOTOS; DESIGNER: HUGO BUGG, SPONSOR: ROYAL BANK OF CANADA; 2 JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS; 3 & 4 JASON INGRAM; 5 STEFFEN HAUSER / BOTANIKFOTO / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 6 CLARE GAINEY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Mary Keen is an internationally renowned designer, currently focusing on her own, new garden. "Growing anything from seed is a thrill. Each time a speck of something that looks like dust turns earth to a haze of green, the seed sower has conjured a tiny, private spring. And then after careful nurturing there will be the full glory of a flower. Seed sowing is magic, a totally absorbing, totally rewarding process."

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Mary Keen

1 *Tagetes* 'Cinnabar'
Associations with other gardeners are important to me. This glorious half-hardy reminds me of Great Dixter's Christopher Lloyd and also of the painter John Hubbard, who first gave me seed of 'Cinnabar' that he had collected from the grave of the Swedish naturalist Linnaeus. It's easy to grow and the tall, burnished marigolds flower for months and months. H 1m, S 60cm.

2 *Cichorium intybus* 'Variegata di Castelfranco' We like to eat salads every day in winter and this speckled leaf chicory has outlasted both the sugarloaf and red sorts. It seems to be completely hardy and I wish I'd sown more. You can pick off the outer leaves, or cut it whole, leaving the stem to regrow. It's delicious and so pretty with other leaves in the bowl. H 20cm.

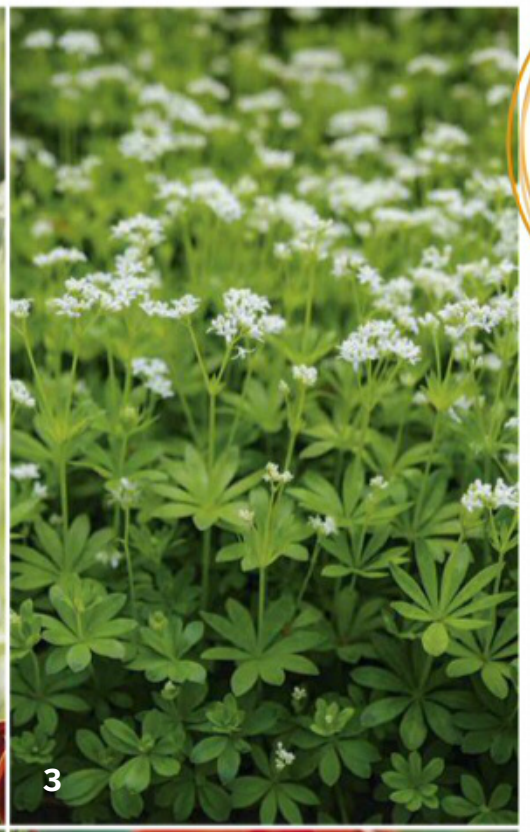
3 *Tulipa sprengeri* These are an expensive tulip choice. They prefer to sow themselves, coming up like grass when they are happy, but I keep hoping to please them in pots, so that there will be masses more to admire. Sometimes growing a tricky customer is frustrating, but when you do succeed there is nothing quite like it. I'm still trying to conjure these flame-red latest of tulip wildlings. H 50cm, S 1m. AGM. RHS H6.

4 *Lathyrus odoratus* 'Matucana' This is the sweet pea with the best scent of all and the dark-velvet, two-toned flowers look good in any setting. Although the stems are short, I would never be without it. Some plants sown in October are waiting in the frame to go down to the allotment, some time in mid-March. If the mice don't get them, winter sowing makes for stronger, earlier plants. H 2.5m, S 50cm. AGM. RHS H3.

5 *Paeonia rockii* Fabulously expensive yet incredibly easy to grow from seed, provided you are patient. Sow fresh seed in damp vermiculite, and keep in a plastic bag through the summer. Once the roots appear, keep the bag cool and when the shoots show, pot them up. Only when two leaves appear can you start to get excited. I have one in its fourth year, now planted out. Who knows when I will see a first flower? H 2.5m, S 2.5m. RHS H6.

6 *Brassica oleracea* hybrid brukale A cross between sprouts and kale, and better than Brussels sprouts by far. Easier to pick in cold weather when sprouts cling stubbornly to their stalks, kalettes or flower sprouts barely need more than a rinse to prepare, and they taste delicious. One of the best veg growers I know is giving up sprouts for kalettes. I may follow her example. H 70cm.

PORTRA T JASON INGRAM 1 MAAYKE DE R DDER; 2 & 6 JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS; 3 FIONA RICE / GAP PHOTOS; 4 & 5 JASON INGRAM.



Adolfo Harrison

Adolfo Harrison is an award-winning, London-based designer and tutor at KLC School of Design.
"It wasn't long ago that I would only use seed for vegetables, green manure or annuals. Now, we're also starting to use annual seeds to work in tandem with potted perennials to create more complex planting and habitats. In these cases, we spread the chosen annual throughout a matrix, as a groundcover plant that ties in the overall scheme with a base texture and colour, and helps out-compete weeds hoping to colonise the bare soil."
adolfoharrison.com

1 ***Capsicum annuum*** **'Padron'** The Padron pepper that we recognise from tapas menus is well suited to growing in the UK, and will keep producing mostly mild chillies until autumn. My dad grows them every year to bring a bit of Spain into our lives. He pots them on to hand out as gifts, and is proud of the fact that one of his plants even ended up in the Vitamin C border at the Chelsea Physic Garden. H 50cm, S 40cm.

2 ***Ratibida columnifera*** **f.** ***pulcherrima*** **'Red Midget'** I was once lucky enough to collaborate with planting expert Chris Marchant on a project where the brief was to create a tapestry of warm colours. Through the research it became apparent that a significant percentage of floriferous plants for hot borders are short-lived species. Chris introduced me to this choice, which is a great example of a short but vibrant life fully lived. Usually grown as an annual, it is a perennial so may return the following year. H 50cm, S 50cm. RHS H6.

3 ***Galium odoratum*** Scattered on prepared soil around other woodland perennials and shrubs, *G. odoratum* creates beautifully textured and scented groundcover for a semi-shaded aspect matrix, and creates the ideal stage for more dominant plants. H 30cm, S 1m. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

4 ***Primula veris*** **'Sunset Shades'** I wasn't always a huge fan of *Primula veris*, but I'm starting to use it more after reading James Hitchmough's enthusiastic account of their usefulness as an early flowering, low-level plant that can handle being overshadowed later by taller perennials. *P. veris* 'Sunset Shades' offers some warmth when we yearn for it after winter. H 25cm, S 25cm.

5 ***Orlaya grandiflora*** When the RHS Chelsea Flower Show is held in its more normal slot of May, the white laceflowe with its understated elegance is one of the show's classic plants. Its long outer petals give it such a clear and bold silhouette while still offering the porosity you get from an umbel. The first time I grew it was from a seed packet that came with *Gardens Illustrated* years ago. H 75cm, S 50cm. AGM. RHS H7.

6 ***Tropaeolum majus*** **'Empress of India'** This nasturtium cultivar is to red what *Eschscholzia* is to orange. I first saw it taking over the front of a tidy yew hedge, and it was both the deep green and formality of the yew that showed off its rambling habit and deep-red flowers to their best. You can almost see it grow in front of your eyes – it's basically part animal, part salad. H 20cm, S 30cm.

1 THE OXFORDSH RE CH LL GARDEN / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 2 V CTOR A F RMSTON / GAP PHOTOS; 3 & 5 JASON INGRAM; 4 MAAYKE DE RIDDER; 6 ROB WHITWORTH / GAP PHOTOS.

Arne Maynard is an award-winning, international garden designer, but describes himself first and foremost as a gardener. "There is something inherently magical about raising plants from seed. It starts with giddy excitement when the seed arrives through your letterbox and you hold those wonderful packets of life in your hands. It continues as you carefully sow the dormant seeds and wait patiently (or impatiently) for the promise of new life to emerge. And when those first shoots appear, the magic of growing can begin. With wonderful satisfaction, you can enjoy nurturing those young shoots to maturity to enjoy in your garden and share with friends."
arnemaynard.com

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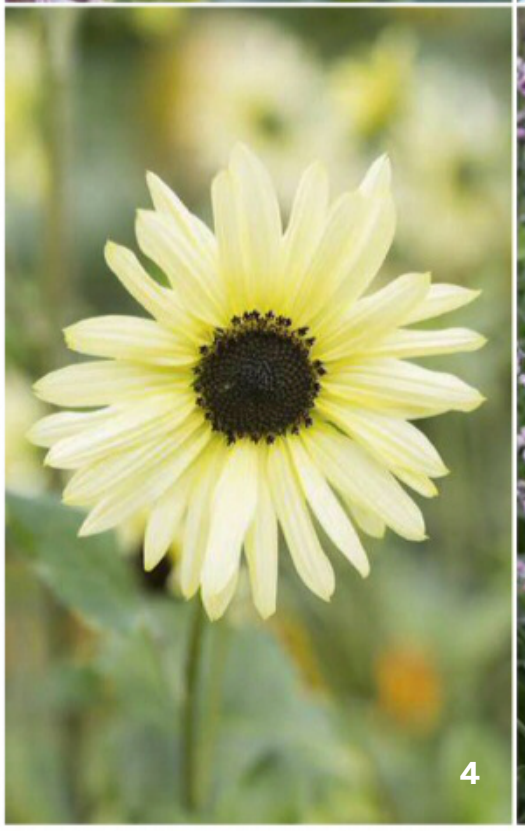
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Arne Maynard

1 *Vicia faba* 'Aquadulce Claudia'
A favourite broad bean that we have grown for many years . We sow directly in December for cropping in May and then sow again in February for early summer crops. It needs gentle staking with hazel twigs and twine to support its growth and generous pods. The beans are delicious blitzed with garlic, olive oil, lemon juice and seasoning, spooned on to toast with a hint of chilli flakes. H 1m, S 45cm. AGM. RHS H5.

2 Brassica oleracea 'Nero di Toscana'The dark-green leaves of this stunning Italian heirloom kale are wonderfully decorative; they look amazing coated in frost and make a beautiful addition to the winter vegetable garden. We do two sowings for planting out in late March and early June. The leaves can be cropped regularly to add to pasta with olive oil and parmesan cheese. H 90m.

3 *Tragopogon porrifolius* Salsify, also known as the oyster plant, is a favourite. The roots look like thin parsnips and can be cooked in a similar fashion. We grow it for its lovely soft-purple flowers, which appear in May and make a beautiful addition to a meadow. The flowers unfold in the morning into purple stars and track the sun's path. Once they fade, dandelion-like seedheads appear and disperse naturally in the wind. H 1m, S 40cm.

4 *Helianthus debilis* subsp. *cucumerifolius* 'Italian White' This elegant sunflower produces graceful, arching branches with masses of buds and flowers. The flowers are pale yellow, fading to white, and look beautiful nodding in the breeze. Although the stem is sturdy, it is worth adding a pea stick to the main stem during growth to ensure the branches are free to move in the wind and to enjoy the sunshine. H 1.5m, S 1m.

5 *Cynoglossum amabile* f. *roseum* 'Mystery Rose' A fabulous plant to direct sow among the borders in late winter or autumn or under glass for planting out in spring. Although relatively short-lived, it will produce plenty of flowers in early June and makes a wonderful understorey for other emerging flowering perennials. It will seed freely within borders and pathways. H 90cm.

6 *Smyrnium perfoliatum* A vibrant summer-flowering perennial with soft yellow-green flowers. We grow it in a shady border among hellebores, ferns and a mature witch hazel, where the flowers grow through the lower branches creating dappled light that reflects off the water in the stream. Once the flowers have faded and start to dry, remove the seedheads and place in a paper bag; a quick shake and you will have epic quantities of black seed to share. H 90cm. RHS H5.

PORTRA T BR TT W LLOUGHBY DYER. 1 PAT TUSON / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 2 MED ASCULP / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 3 JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS; 4 PAUL DEBO S / GAP PHOTOS; 5 JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS, DESIGNER: SARAH RAVEN; 6 JASON INGRAM.

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Isabel Bannerman

Designers Isabel and Julian Bannerman are known for their lush, colour-filled gardens. "My seed longings list can become too dangerous and overwhelming. The choices must be focused and here are some criteria; plants that you cannot generally buy as plants; plants that you want in such quantity you cannot afford to buy as plants; plants that are easily grown from seed and better gown from such, such as zinnias and poppies." **bannermandesign.com**

1 *Lunaria annua* A thigh-high, hardy wilding, covered with white or violet flowers in late spring followed by lucid, moon-shaped seedheads. We collect from roadsides or wherever we can because the colour of flowers is variable, and we like to have many shades of lilac and royal purple through to blue. They self-sow in the garden but slugs love them at that delicious, first true-leaf stage, so sow and pot on until they are big enough to cope better. H 90cm, S 30cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

2 *Cynara cardunculus* Scolymus Group I love growing different kinds of artichoke from seed because they are statuesque, easy and rewarding, as well as edible and esoteric in flavour. They are generally hardy and bountiful, and, left uneaten, the huge electric-blue thistle flowers are beloved by bees. H 2m, S 1.2m. RHS H5, USDA 7a-10b.

3 *Nicotiana suaveolens* A compelling plant that is hard to find. It might be best thought of as a half-hardy biennial because you tend only to benefit from its enchanting night scent in its second year. Germination of the fine seed is surprisingly easy, but they need heat to grow faster. They grow tall and elegant, the flowers pale trumpets belting out a warm, velvety smell, more refined than that for which tobacco flowers are so famously generous. H 1.2m, S 40cm.

4 *Primula vulgaris* These are easy to grow and every garden should have thousands for their luminosity in winter and scent. At Caerhayes in Cornwall they are so thick in the grass you have to step on them. For such a primrose path, or under a hedge, sow in plug trays. Seedlings are best transplanted when small but sturdy in late winter. H 10cm, S 10cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

5 *Quercus robur* Julian likes to fill his pockets with the acorns of characterful English oaks. Look out for healthy acorns in September before they drop. Put each one in a small pot with compost and water well, then keep it just damp and outside and wait for germination. Find a happy spot for something that will grow tall and wide. H30m, S 30m. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.

6 *Reseda odorata* Mignonette is in the 'impossible to buy plants' category. The flowers look like something in a rock pool, and need to be overwintered before flowering in the second year. Its intense, confectionery-like perfume bewitched Victorians, who managed to grow small standard trees out of them for table decoration. This is seed growing for the obsessive. But as an experiment I found it fascinating. H 50cm, S 50cm. RHS H6.

READER OFFER
Turn to page 112 for our special reader offer on seeds to sow inspired by our designers' choices here.

PORTRA T JASON NGRAM; 1, 3 & 4 JASON NGRAM; 2 V CTOR A F RMSTON / GAP PHOTOS; 5 PREM U
STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY GMBH / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 6 FRIEDRICH STRAUSS / GAP PHOTOS.

HORTICULTURAL WHO'S WHO

SHARON FISHER

The series producer of the BBC's *Gardeners' World* on the challenges of filming outdoors, designing her own garden from scratch and learning how to please everyone

WORDS LIA LEENDERTZ PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Although Sharon Fisher is delighted to find herself at the helm of *Gardeners' World*, she had no great masterplan behind her rise to the top of gardening television. "I have a significant birthday coming up and so I have been thinking a lot about how I got here, but the truth is it just wasn't planned at all." She grew up in Kings Heath, Birmingham (near to the park from where *Gardeners' World* was broadcast in 1996) and studied Communication Studies at university. After graduating she took on a voluntary position answering phones on *Good Morning with Anne and Nick* at the BBC's Pebble Mill Studios. A subsequent job as a researcher on the show led to her first piece of horticultural serendipity, working with Stefan Buczacki on his practical gardening demonstrations. From there, again entirely by chance, she went on to work in daytime television and on the garden makeover show *Real Rake-Overs* with Diarmuid Gavin and on *Housecall* with Chris Beardshaw. It was this experience, she says, that first got her interested in gardening. "It's also where I learnt my craft producing and directing. When you produce fast turnaround telly you have a tight budget and a lot of programmes to make, so it gave me skills that I still use today."

When Pebble Mill closed in 2004 she moved with the BBC to the Mailbox in Birmingham city centre and had the opportunity to work as a director on *Gardeners' World* and then, from 2011 to 2016, as a live producer and then series producer of the televised *RHS Chelsea Flower Show*, further honing her skills in a highly pressured environment, making 13 hours of TV a week. In 2017, the programme's 50th year, the opportunity arose to become series producer of *Gardeners' World*.

Making on average 30 programmes a year is always going to be a challenge, and the nature of the programme – being filmed mainly outdoors – adds its own problems. The weather is the main source of havoc that Sharon and her team have learned to negotiate, "particularly in the spring when it's cold and muddy and flowers haven't opened. On grey, wet days I truly appreciate the talent of the crews we work with. They create floral magic."

Sharon's love of gardening has crept up on her as she has spent more time around gardens and gardeners, and she now finds herself a bit of an addict. "My grandad George was a real gardener. He grew roses and wallflowers for my nan in their terraced garden in Selly Oak. And my mum is always in her garden, she spends hours out there. I picked up the green gene from them." Three years ago, she moved to a new-build in the Cotswolds and has been enjoying designing her garden from scratch. "It was daunting being face with a 6m-squared blank space," she says, "but I deliberately didn't ask for advice, because I wanted the chance to make it my own. I knew I wanted some trees for privacy and I invested in three good-sized crab apples. The birds started to visit straight away and the space began to take shape." She is particularly delighted by her worms, having started with typical barren new-build soil, filled with rubble. "Now it is rich and deep and there are lots of worms. I am proud of that." She considers this success a part of a gradual increase in her knowledge and enthusiasm. "I didn't know anything about gardening when I started at *Gardeners' World*, but I am surrounded by the best. I've had 16 years at the best gardening college in the world."

> I'VE HAD 16 YEARS AT THE BEST GARDENING COLLEGE IN THE WORLD

The programme generally develops organically year on year rather than any one person making any big decisions about new direction, and Sharon doesn't yet know what the new season will hold. But the viewers' films – which were new to 2020 – have become a big hit and she already knows that these will definitely stay. "We were sent over 8,000 films, from viewers all over the UK and Europe and as far away as New Zealand, Canada and the USA. It's incredible how much love there is for the programme across the world."

Last year the programme gained half a million viewers and so the challenge this year is to hang on to every one of them and this means attempting to give all of them what they want. "It means having plenty of varied content, as we need to cater to everyone: the people who can only grow houseplants, the real expert gardeners who have been doing it for years, the people who just tune in to see [presenter] Monty [Don] and the dogs, and everyone in between."

Sharon feels a huge sense of responsibility for the programme. On Friday nights she watches it along with the rest of us, following along on social media (#gardenersworld, if you want to join in). "There is so much reaction, it's always a good reminder that even though we all work so hard on it, the programme belongs to the nation. I am just one of its current custodians and that is wonderful. I just want to do my best because I want it to still be going strong in another 50 years." □

A clump of the *Narcissus* ‘Helios’ brighten the bank of the moat at Columbine Hall. These sun-like daffodils, raised by the Rev G Engleheart, are part of the National Collection of Engleheart Narcissus that is shared by Columbine Hall and seven other sites in Suffolk.

One man's passion

In the latter part of the 19th century, a country clergyman, the Rev G Engleheart, began breeding daffodils. The more than 700 beautifully simple cultivars he raised now form a unique National Collection split across six different holders

WORDS **ALYS FOWLER** PHOTOGRAPHS **RICHARD BLOOM**

No service today, working with daffodils' was a note that Reverend George Herbert Engleheart (1851-1936) would often tack to the church door before returning to his garden to breed daffodils. And what daffodils they are: 'Bath Flame', 'Helios', 'Lady Margaret Boswell', 'White Lady', 'Seagull', the list goes on and on. Over 40 years he developed more than 700 cultivars, many of which, by the early 1900s, graced gardens here and abroad in their millions.

Engleheart was in some ways a typical late Victorian gentleman-clergyman; at the time it was quite acceptable to pursue other scholarly interests between sermons and parish duties. He was a gifted linguist, wrote verse and was passionate about archaeology. But it was not until he landed a curacy in Hampshire in 1881 that he developed his passion for horticulture and with that a fascination with narcissus breeding. He had quite the eye for it. His daffodils are typified by a simple elegance, a ruffle here, a fill there, a twist to perianth or a nod of the head.

"They are quite amazing these old narcissi, perhaps because they have fewer chromosomes than modern varieties; they are more simplistic and beautiful," says Anne Tweddle, one of holders of National Collection of Engleheart Daffodils. The Engleheart Collection is just five years old and unusually is a disperse collection, meaning that there is more than one collection holder and location for these historic plants. By being part of a group, individual holders can house the whole collection or just part of it.

Engleheart may have begun breeding narcissi in Hampshire, but it is the Suffolk Group of Plant Heritage that has taken ownership of the collection. "We came at it [the collection] rather sideways,"says Anne, who is the group's propagation officer. "It's not that we were dedicated to Engleheart, but that we'd learned how to twin-scale at the monthly propagation meeting of our Plant Heritage group. We decided to raise some rare plants for our twice-yearly plant sales. What you start to notice with rare daffodils is that Engleheart's name is attached to many of them. And these plants were very popular; they bulk up well and people really like that. I'd never contemplated a national collection – I didn't think I was nerdy enough – and it seemed a lot of work. But then I heard about the disperse collection and these things keep coming back at you."

Currently, the collection is dispersed among six holders, and Anne believes the continuity of the collection benefits from having several keepers. "As a group we've blossomed in our ability to research the provenance and historical aspects of the collection, to read and write daffodil descriptions and widen our garden knowledge", says Anne. The scattered grouping means the daffodils are grown in a range of conditions, some housed entirely in pots or in small gardens, others roaming the grounds around moats.

The collection currently houses 34 known cultivars and there is much detective work still to be done to find other lost Engleheart bulbs. "There are quite a few in America and we've made contact with the US Daffodil Society," says Anne. "There's also the connection to plantswoman Ellen Willmott and her garden at Warley Place in Essex." Willmott hugely admired Engleheart's work and they become close friends. Her support was invaluable. "He didn't have very good growing conditions at the beginning of his breeding career, and she had money and the most superb loam to grow in," says Anne.

Engleheart eventually made enough money to move in 1901 to Little Clarendon, in Wiltshire, where he had 27 acres for his daffodils. "He seems to have known instinctively what would work in a daffodil. You have to remember it would have taken 12-13 years back then for a cross to seed and flower to a size to prove a theory. He had great patience," says Anne.

Kate Elliot, head gardener at the magnificent 14th-century Columbine Hall, which houses the bulk of the collection has quite fallen for them. "Engleheart's daffodils are smaller than modern ones and more delicate. It's wonderful to help preserve a historical collection," she says. They are very garden-worthy plants and are bulking up nicely, despite only having been in the ground for a couple of years. "We have very good garden loam, but there's also some clay, so I add a handful of grit to the bottom of each planting hole to add drainage," says Kate.

Engleheart's daffodils are largely crosses between *N. poeticus* and the trumpet sort. "*Poeticus* come from damp meadows, and the trumpets tolerate quite a bit of shade, so they are a good cross in that way, but they must not dry out when they are first putting their roots down in August and September," says Anne. "Often this is the reason why they go blind [don't flower]. But equally they can't be waterlogged over the winter. They they want good garden loam, good drainage and some sun."

Columbine Hall has a number of orchards and large areas of meadows where Kate has planted up drifts of daffodils. "It's a very romantic garden and these beautiful plants are really suited to informal settings," says Kate. Thanks to Plant Heritage and the Engleheart collection holders, we can also enjoy that beauty. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Columbine Hall, Stowupland, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 4AT. **Tel** 01449 612219.
Website columbinehall.co.uk **Open** Most years the garden opens by appointment for large groups and for an open day in April. See website for details.
Find out more about the National Collection of Engleheart Daffodils at suffolkplantheritage.com/national-collections/narcissus

Turn the page for 16 Engleheart introductions ▷

One of the Rev G Engleheart's introductions, *Narcissus* 'Lady Margaret Boscawen' won a first-class certificate at the RHS spring show when it took its debut in 1898. It has a large, sturdy flower with a long, spreading milk-white perianth with a strong lemon yellow corona.

They are quite amazing perhaps because they have fewer chromosomes than modern varieties; they are more simplistic and beautiful

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16 Engleheart introductions

1 *Narcissus* ‘Cassandra’ A pheasant’s eye type with white perianth (the petals or outer part of the flowerhead) and a cup-shaped corona (the trumpet-shaped inner part) with a glowing orange and red margin and green eye at the base. Richly fragranced. Mid to late season. 30-65cm.

2 *Narcissus* ‘Resolute’ A Nelsonii Group daffodil with outer perianth opening primrose yellow, slightly reflexed with a corona in a soft rich lemon shading, darkening to apricot at the rim. Introduced before 1903. Mid to late season. It’s a dwarf daffodil that grows to less than 30cm.

3 *Narcissus* ‘Sarchedon’ A large-flowered Poeticus type with an extremely broad-spreading outer perianth and a tightly frilled and disk-shaped corona. Named after an ancient King of Assyria. Pre 1910. Late season and standard size 30-65cm.

4 *Narcissus* ‘Evangeline’ Has a large flower with a wide, pure-white perianth and bowl-shaped, ribbed, clear-yellow corona that is lightly frilled. Pre-1908. Mid season, Tall – its height can be greater than 65cm.

5 *Narcissus* ‘Sea Green’ Has single, white flowers where the corona is detailed with bright green at the throat with a crimson ribbon to the edge. Late season, Standard size 30-65cm.

6 *Narcissus* ‘Horace’ Has a corona that opens a glowing saffron-orange with a dull moss-green centre, but with age fades to muted colours. Pre-1894. Mid season, Tall, grows greater than 65cm.

7 *Narcissus* ‘Seagull’ Has clean white perianth segments and a shallow, pleated, yellow corona with a well-defined orange rim that fades with age. Early to mid season, Standard size, grows 30-65cm.

8 *Narcissus* ‘Sonata’ A typical pheasant’s eye type of daffodil with a sulphur-yellow corona that has a crimson rim and a green heart. It has pure white, overlapping perianth and a good scent. Raised in 1910. Mid to late season, Standard size 30-65cm.

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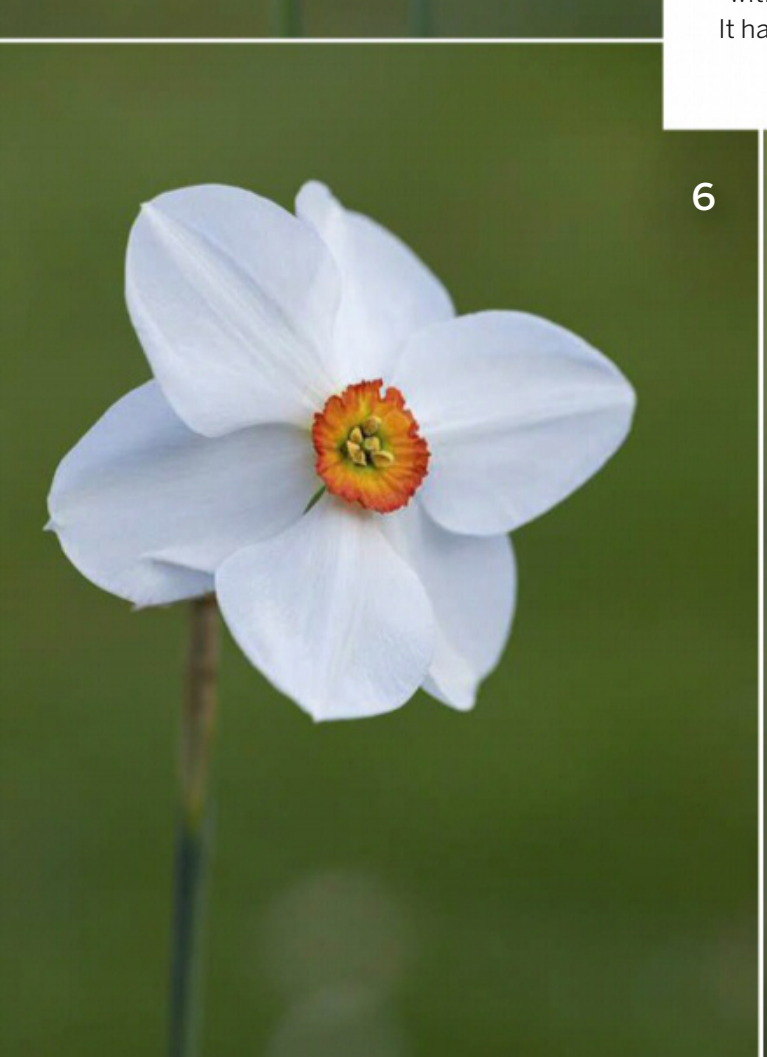
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9 *Narcissus* 'Will Scarlett' The bulb that dazzled the world when it was first introduced in 1898. Its charming, slightly unruly white petals surround a large, bowl-shaped corona that is a fiery scarlet-orange. Mid to late season. Tall, 65cm.

10 *Narcissus* 'Magnificence' A bright, pure-yellow daffodil. Its slightly nodding, solitary flower has a long, serrated, wavy trumpet. Pre-1914. Very early, Standard size, grows 30-65cm.

11 *Narcissus* 'Bath's Flame' Perhaps the most widely available of the Engleheart introductions, it has large, floppy flowers with spreading perianth that fade to a straw yellow. It has a tightly ruffled corona with a broad band of reddish orange. Pre. 1910. Early to mid season. Standard size, 30-65cm.

12 *Narcissus* 'White Lady' This sweetly scented cultivar was a very popular cut flower in the years before the Second World War. It has tall stems with soft white perianth around a small yellow cup with a delicate scent. Pre 1898. Mid season. Standard size 30-65cm.

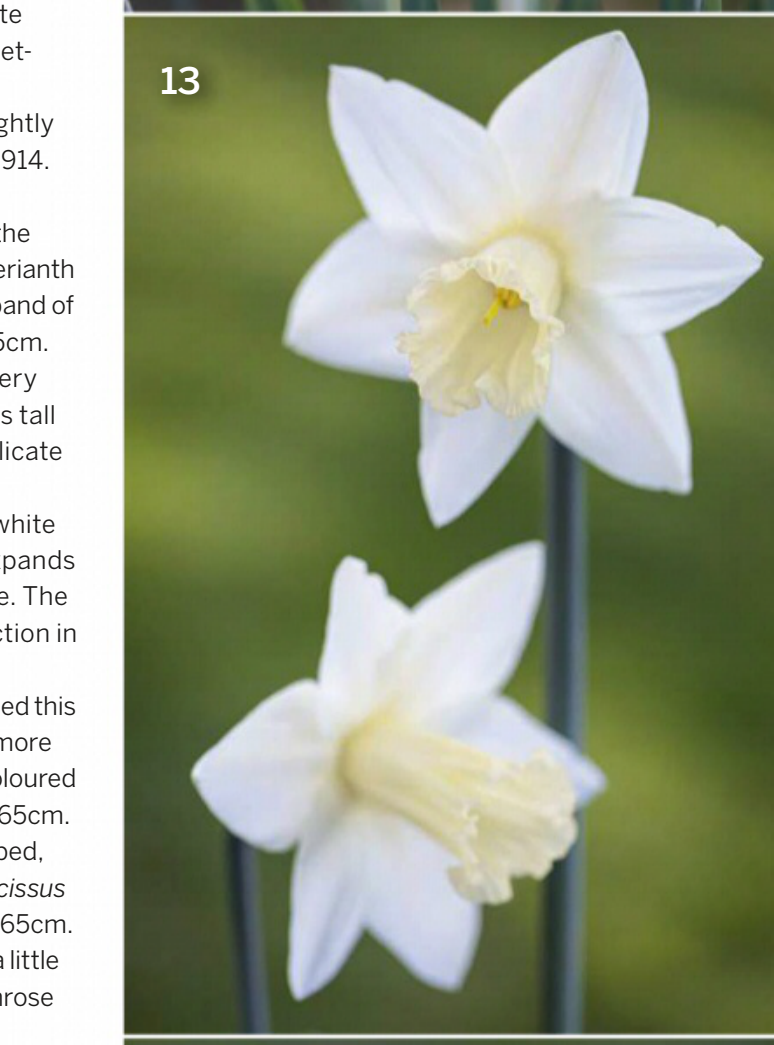
13 *Narcissus* 'Beersheba' A delicate daffodil with nodding snow-white flowers with white, pointed perianth. The slender trumpet, which expands into a flange at its mouth, opens pale lemon and then fades to white. The first pure-white trumpet and became very popular after its introduction in 1923. Early to mid season. Standard size, 30-65cm.

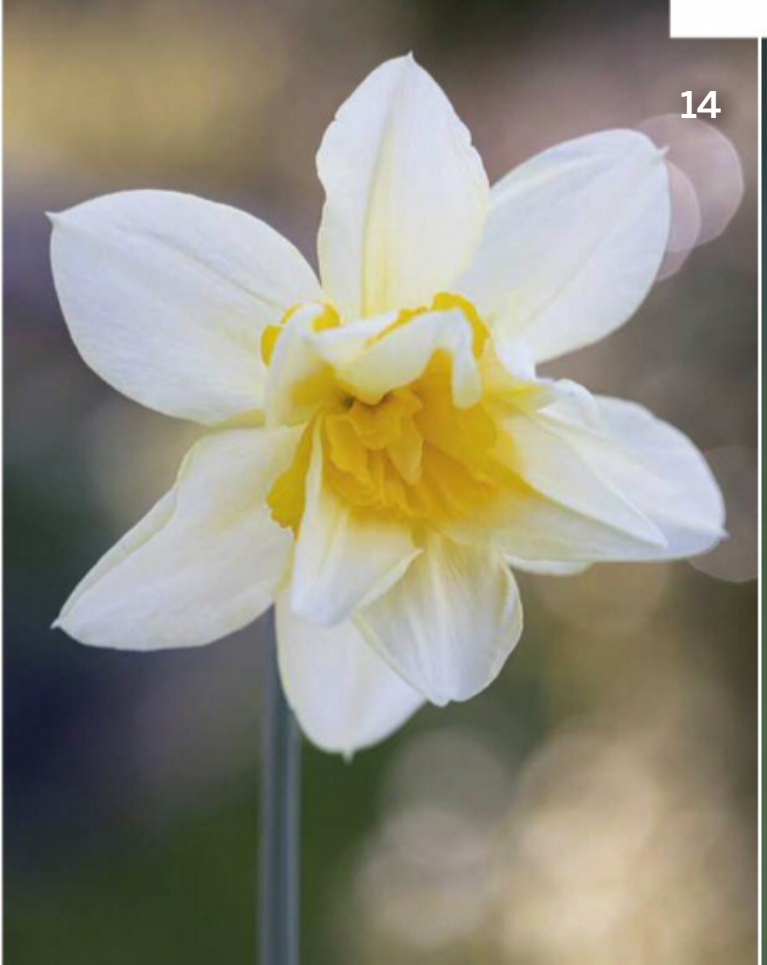
14 *Narcissus* 'Argent' The plantsman and garden writer EA Bowles called this the very best of the double daffodils. An informal double with two or more whorls of slender, milk-white perianth combined with short, egg yolk-coloured ones and a partial cup. Pre 1902. Mid to late season. Standard size 30-65cm.

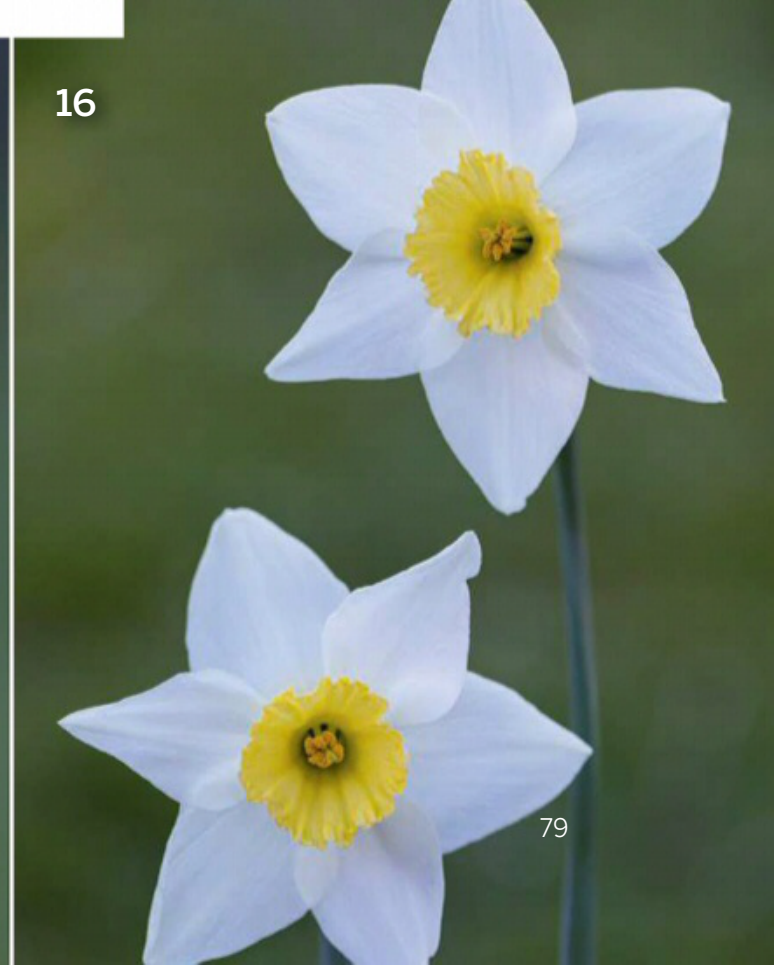
15 *Narcissus* 'Firebrand' Distinctive daffodil with a brilliant cup-shaped, orange corona with white wavy, separated perianth, like its parent *Narcissus poeticus* subsp. *radiiflorus*. Raised 1897. Mid season. Standard size 30-65cm.

16 *Narcissus* 'Mitylene' Has a wide, milk-white perianth that overlap a little with wavy margins. Its bowl-shaped corona is narrowly ribbed in primrose yellow. pre-1923. Mid season. Tall, grows greater than 65cm.

Most narcissi have a hardiness rating of RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.





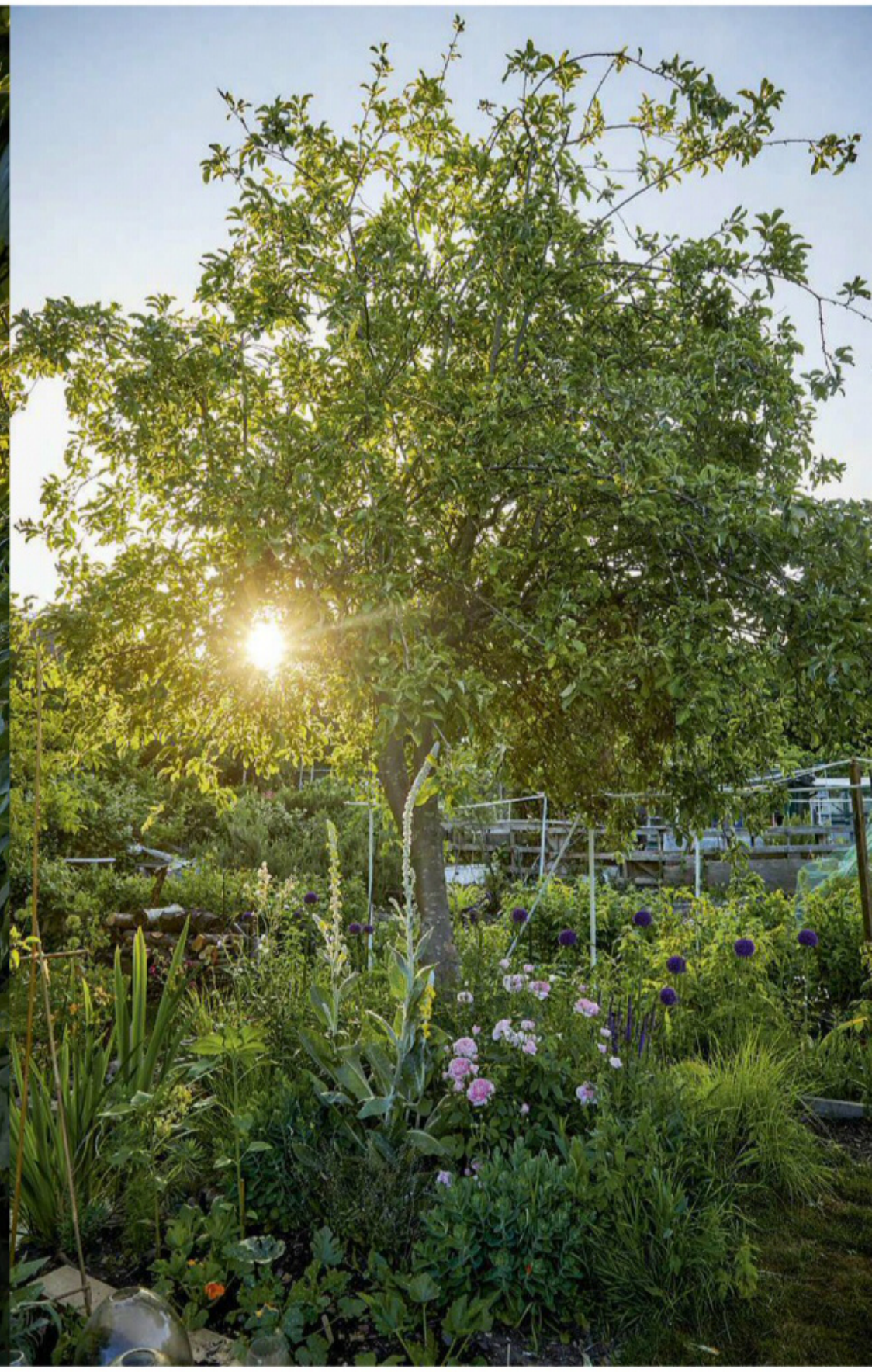


IN BRIEF
What Garden designer's productive and ornamental allotment.
Where London.
Size 6m x 35m.
Soil Sandy.
Climate Temperate.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.

The experimental plot

Garden designer Stefano Marinaz's Chiswick allotment is both a productive space and a place for him to trial new plants and combinations

WORDS NATASHA GOODFELLOW PHOTOGRAPHS ALISTER THORPE



Five years ago garden designer Stefano Marinaz had something of a near miss. Having been on the waiting list for an allotment for two and a half years, he overlooked his acceptance letter by a week, leaving him with just a few days to take up the offer. "Thank goodness I wasn't on holiday," he says, "or it would have been given to somebody else." Luckily, everything worked out and the allotment is now a vital part of his life. He's there at least three mornings a week before work, and at weekends too – although he concedes that this time is more about enjoying the space than working on it.

Stefano started out simply hoping to grow some of his own veg, to reduce his reliance on the supermarket and all the plastics that so often entails. But as time has gone on, the plot has become so much more besides, acting as both a trial garden and a nursery space for his commissions, and as a welcome escape from city life. As such, it is an appealing mix of the productive and the ornamental with planting beds filled with *Knautia macedonica*, *Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation' and *Asclepias tuberosa* dotted among the neat raised beds of onions and cavolo nero, the strawberry cage and the trailing squashes ('Turk's Turban' and red onion squash are particular favourites).

The greenhouse at the front of the plot is pivotal. "I grow my tomatoes there but I've included shelves so I can trial lots of seeds, too," says Stefano. As the grandson of a seedsman, this has always been a keen interest of Stefano's and he likes to keep an eye out for unusual cultivars. He favours Sarah Raven's selections among others and also propagates from unusual or interesting plants picked up on ▷

Above far left The blooms and seedheads of *Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation' combine well with perennials such as *Gaura lindheimeri* 'Whirling Butterflies', *Monarda* 'Scorpion' and *Echinacea pallida* 'Hula Dancer'.

Above left This magnificent *Verbascum bombyciferum* grows just outside the greenhouse, its base covered by a clump of *Nepeta racemosa* 'Walker's Low'.

Above The old apple tree came with the plot and shelters a bed including *Rosa* 'Madame Boll', *Hylotelephium* 'Herbstfreude' and *Sesleria autumnalis*, valued for its tidy, clump-forming habit and vibrant green hue.

Above Stefano designed the pergola to echo the shape and roofline of the adjacent greenhouse. On it he grows *Vitis* 'Fragola', also known as the strawberry vine for its sweetly flavoured grapes.

▷ his travels. "By growing your own plants, you can observe them year round and at every stage of their lives," he says. "You learn so much."

Some of this is practical. Noting *Verbascum bombyciferum*'s ability to cope with drought, not to mention its height and beauty, Stefano has included plants grown at the allotment in the dry gravel path of a new project in Essex, which also features several of his *Lunaria* seedlings. "From my trials, I've realised how important self-seeders are," he says, "so if there's a bare spot, it's them that fill it, rather than weeds."

Other learnings have been aesthetic. He was delighted to note that another self-seeder, *Nigella papillosa* 'African Bride' has a seedpod quite unlike, but just as interesting as, that of the more common *N. damascena* species. At the other end of the spectrum, the allotment allows him free rein with planting combinations, something he assesses both in the beds and through his daily cuttings, arranged in a vase to inspire future pairings. "Because I see this as a sort of workshop, I don't feel particularly attached to any of the beds in the way one might in a garden, where you want plants to establish," he says. "I'm always excited to replant after a couple of years and to try something new."

So what is he planning for this year? Recent successes, including *Oenothera biennis* with the silvery seedheads of *Stipa ichu*, first spotted in the grass garden at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and a striking mix of *Salvia microphylla*, *Geranium* Rozanne (= 'Gerwat') and the fluffy seedheads of *Anemanthele lessoniana*, will be allowed to continue and develop, and Stefano will take cuttings of the salvia to increase the display next year.

Grasses such as *Stipa tenuissima* and *Molinia caerulea* subsp. *arundinacea* 'Transparent' are used

throughout the allotment to link different beds and create a sense of cohesion and volume without blocking the view, and Stefano is keen to trial more. "Grasses are the key for sustainable natural planting," he says. "If you have a good matrix of the right grasses, the perennials will work around them, but without them, you lack the main ingredient of the meadow." *Stipa gigantea* has already been planted, and other tall, transparent grasses that move with the wind, such as *Pennisetum macrourum* and *Calamagrostis* 'Karl Foerster', are on the list.

As with most of the plants on the allotment, part of the attraction is their low maintenance. The plot is large and Stefano has limited time, so plants that can thrive with little or no intervention always catch his attention. "That's what I love about perennials," he says. "If you've planted them in the right place, you can just leave them to do their thing." □

EASY PLANTS FOR ALLOTMENT INTEREST

1 *Panicum* 'Frosted Explosion' An airy firework of a grass that looks beautiful in sun or pearled with raindrops. Will self-seed, or sow seed indoors February-May. 45cm. RHS H4†.

2 *Kniphofia* 'Bees' Lemon' This drought-resistant, easy-to-grow red-hot poker swaps zingy yellow for the red but is no less striking for that. Divide clumps in spring. 90cm. RHS H5.

3 *Salvia* x *sylvestris* 'Dear Anja' An upright salvia with dark stems and purple-blue flowers. Take softwood cuttings in April. 1m. RHS H7.

4 *Gillenia trifoliata* One of Stefano's favourites, both for its delicate flowers and its sturdy winter skeleton. Sow seed indoors at any time. 40cm. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

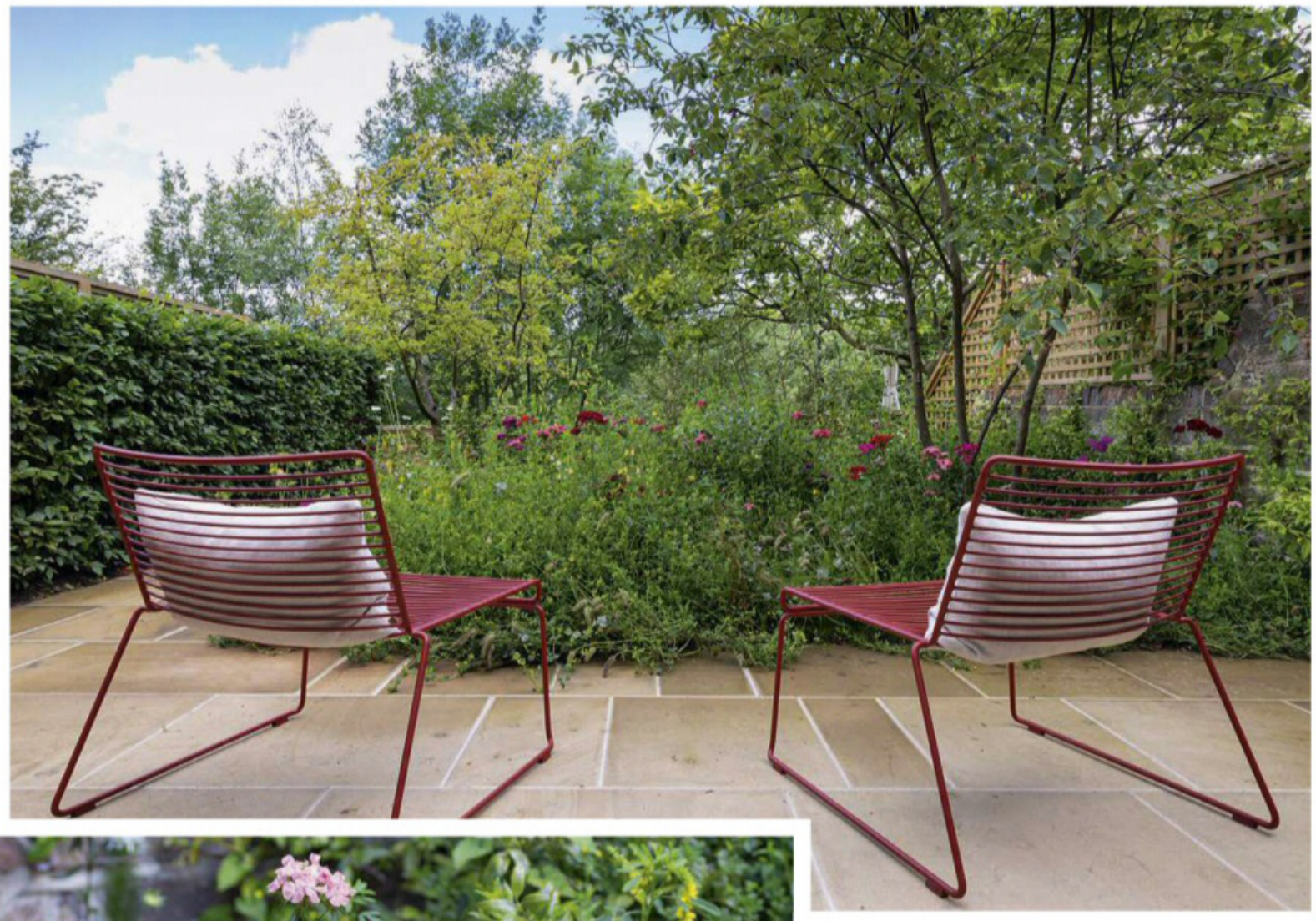
5 *Oenothera biennis* A beautiful yet tough plant with a delicate scent. Its yellow blooms appear at dusk to light up summer evenings. Sow direct in spring (or in a cold frame in autumn). 1.5m. RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.

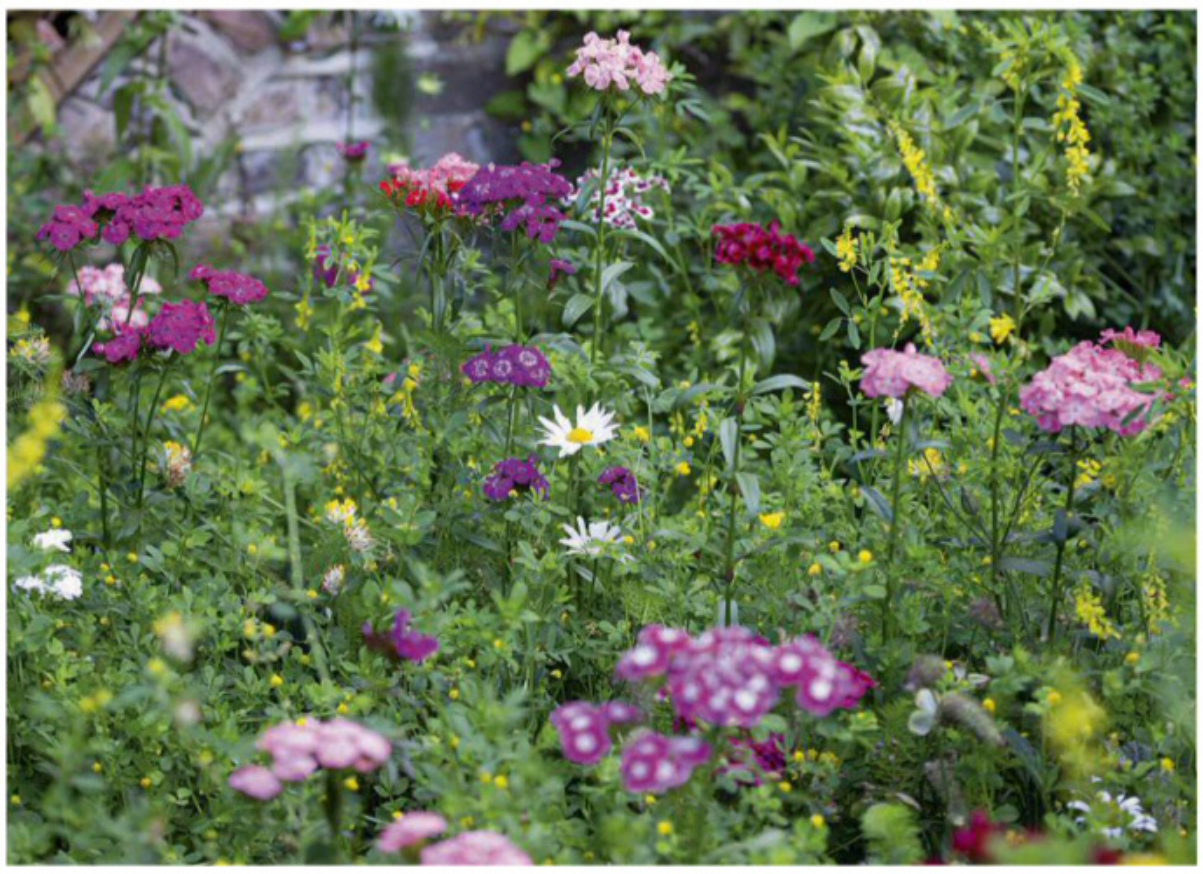
6 *Asclepias tuberosa* Also known as butterfly weed. Waxy, star-burst, summer flowers in yellow and orange. Sow in trays of gritty soil, and grow in sun and dry soil. 90cm. RHS H4, USDA 3a-9b.

7 *Gladiolus murielae* Understated beauty with nodding, highly scented, white flowers that have a distinctive purple blotch at their base. Plant corms in spring for summer display. 1m. AGM RHS H3, USDA 7a-10b.

8 *Nigella papillosa* 'African Bride' Pure-white petals with a dark centre and distinctive seedheads. Sow direct March-May or September-November. 70cm. RHS H3.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

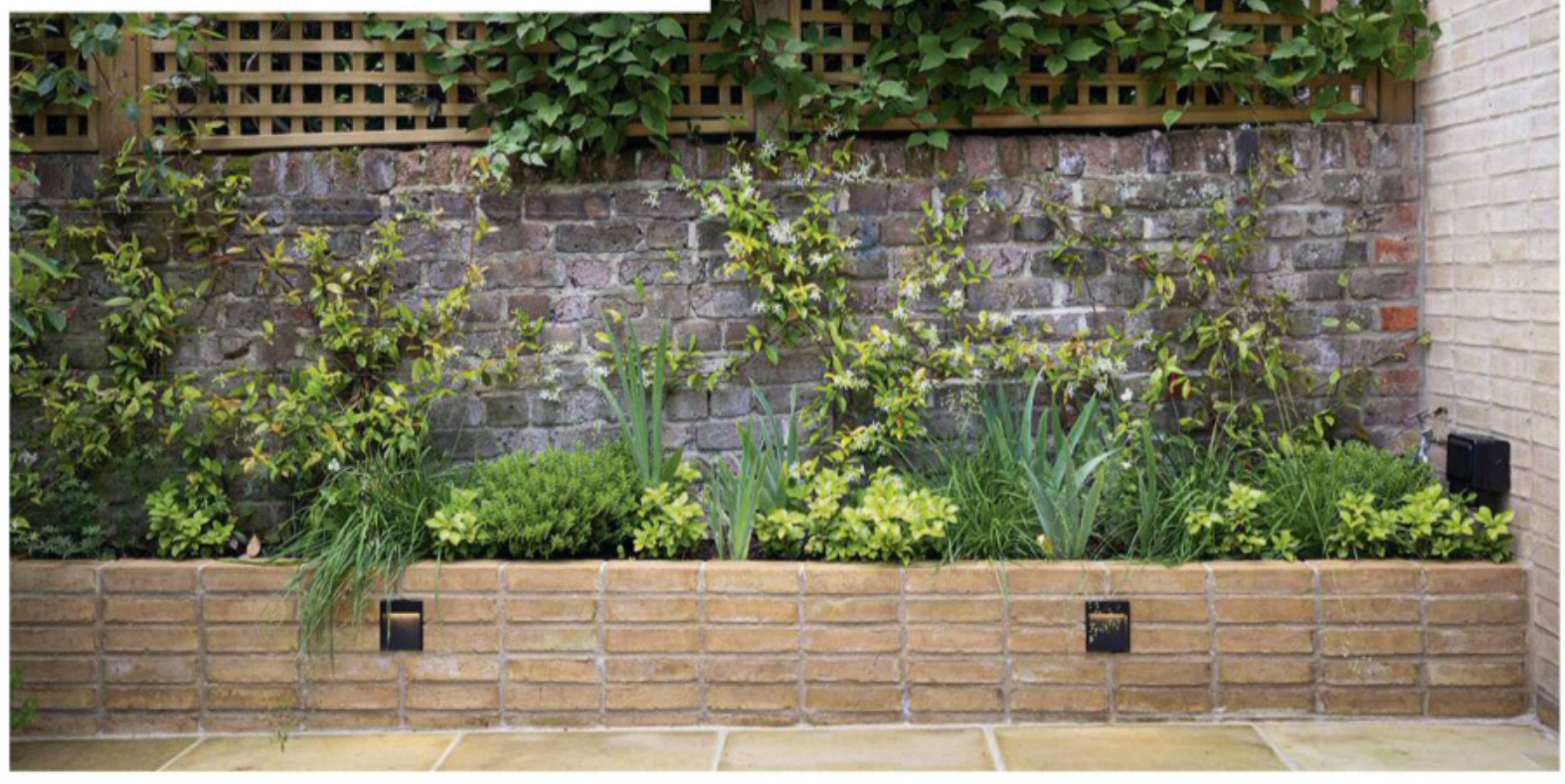




Above Doors open on to the York stone terrace where the owners can sit in the shade of the amelanchier, which offers beautiful white blossom in spring, blazing red foliage in autumn and sculptural form in winter.

Left The meadow mix came from Wildflower Turf (wildflowerturf.co.uk) and includes common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), ox-eye daisies (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*) and sweet Williams (*Dianthus barbatus*).

Below *Iris* 'Jane Phillips' (not yet in flower), *Hebe rakaiensis*, *Hakonechloa macra* and *Pachysandra terminalis* make an impact in a bed near the house. *Trachelospermum jasminoides* and a neighbouring clematis will eventually cover the wall and trellis.



Private paradise

Wildflowers and multi-stemmed trees combine to create a wonderful feeling of seclusion in this Hampstead garden

WORDS **NATASHA GOODFELLOW** PHOTOGRAPHS **RICHARD BLOOM**

Which of us who has walked around the ponds on Hampstead Heath in north London has not paused to gaze across the reeds and the weeping willows and wish ourselves the owner of one of the homes on the other side? The position of the houses is enviable, with private access to the water's edge and views of the heath beyond, but it comes with a certain drawback, namely, those people standing on the opposite bank looking at you in your garden.

This was the challenge facing Henrietta Murray-Wicks when she was commissioned to redesign the garden of one of these homes. Her clients, a couple with three children, loved the plot's proximity to the ponds and were keen to maximise that connection, but they also wanted a sense of seclusion. The brief was for a wild, natural, garden where they could appreciate the changing of the seasons, including from the interior of the house, paired with a clean, architectural approach. "The question was how to marry these and create that sense of immersion in nature," says Henrietta.

There were other factors to take into account. First, there was no side access so all materials had to go up and over a specially constructed scaffold on the new extension to the house. And second, the garden was on two levels, the lower level in particular being very damp, so drainage and careful planting were essential.

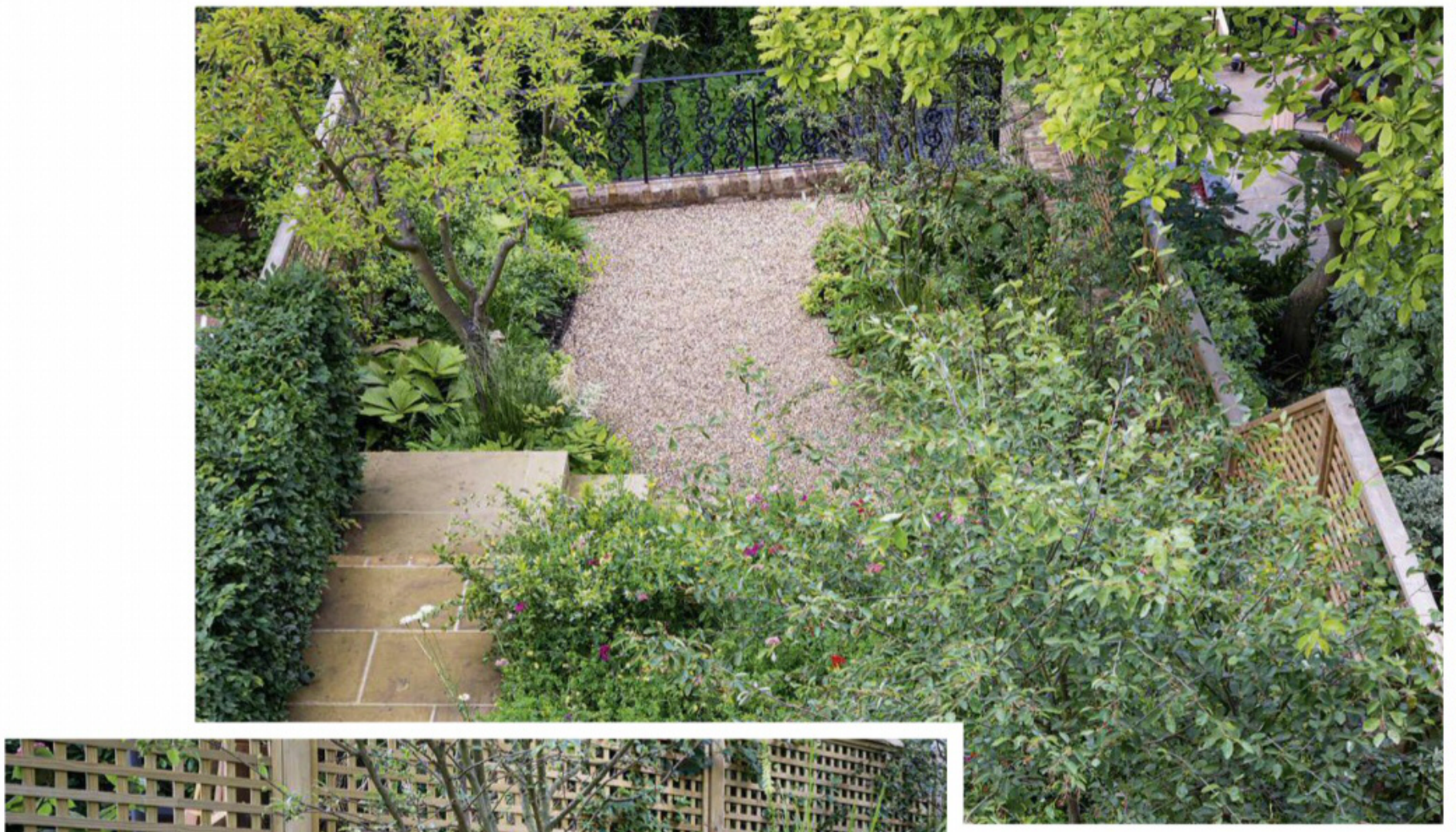
The existing apple tree on the lower level has been complemented with two small, spreading *Malus* 'Evereste', underplanted with damp- and shade-loving plants – *Digitalis lutea*, *Rodgersia podophylla* and *Aruncus dioicus* – redolent of the pond-side location. This area is laid with gravel, partly to help with the drainage but also because "I like the crunching sound as you walk on it," says Henrietta.

A multi-stemmed, umbrella-shaped *Amelanchier* x *lamarckii* (at 4m, the largest that could be carried in) has been planted on the upper level by the house. Together with the *Malus* and the borrowed branches of a wonderful magnolia next door, they create a canopy level and offer the sense of seclusion the clients were looking for. The main feature of the garden – a glorious flowering meadow buzzing with bees and set in a crisp framework of York stone and stacked yellow bricks

IN BRIEF

What City garden.
Where London.
Size 14m x 6.5m.
Soil Clay.
Climate Temperate, with cool winters and warm summers.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.

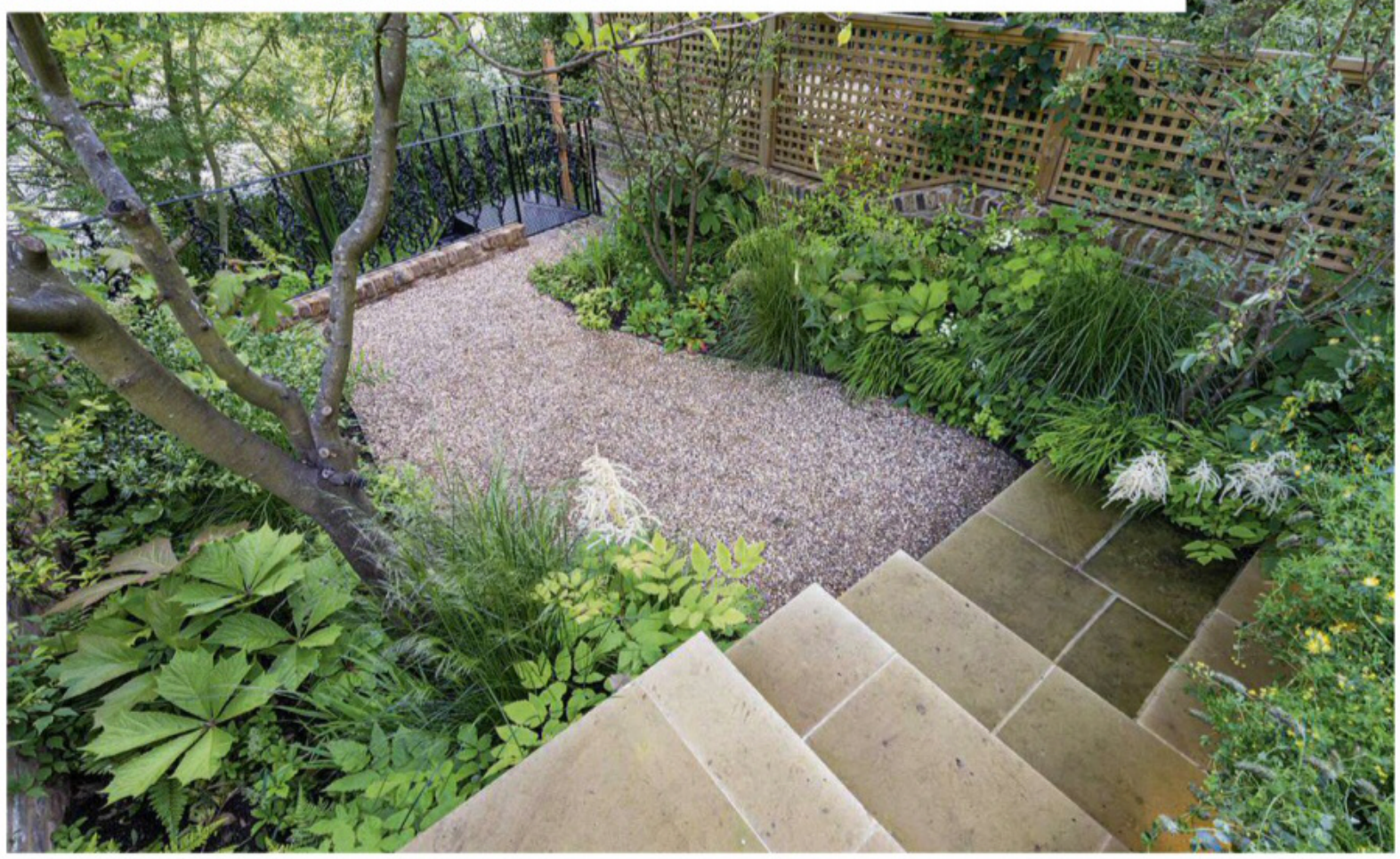
Above The canopy of the *Amelanchier* x *lamarckii* in the foreground seems to knit with that of the *Malus* and the other trees beyond; combined with the meadow beneath, it shields the garden from the view of walkers on the heath opposite. Cleverly, it also hides the lower part of the garden, meaning that the whole space does not reveal itself all at once.



Above A tightly clipped hornbeam hedge provides an effective counterbalance to the wildness of the meadow. Henrietta likes the changing nature of hornbeam (from fresh green in spring to copper in autumn and bare branches winter), and its ability to cope with damper soils.

Left In the lower part of the garden, a multi-stemmed *Malus* 'Evereste', is underplanted with a mix of shade- and damp-loving plants, including *Hydrangea quercifolia*, *Digitalis lutea*, *Aruncus dioicus* and *Deschampsia cespitosa*. The trellis on the boundary walls will age to a silvery colour.

Below The lower more shaded gravel area allows a couple of chairs to be positioned overlooking the water. Steps at the far end lead down to a communal area next to the ponds.



The joy is in not knowing exactly what will come up each year and seeing how quickly the garden changes

▷ inspired by the new extension on the house – adds to this atmosphere. The meadow is unruly and unpredictable, changing rapidly from perhaps cowslips and forget-me-nots early in the season to yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and pinks (*Dianthus plumarius*) later on, before transforming again with ox-eye daisies and autumn hawkbit (*Scorzoneroides autumnalis*).

It is perhaps this sense of flux that makes the garden such a success. In autumn, the hornbeam hedge turns copper, before slowly revealing its sculptural branches. The meadow dies down to expose clumps of *Sarcococca confusa* hidden in its depths – the fragrance becoming stronger as the days get colder. And as winter sets in, the heath clears of people and the amelanchier drops its last crimson leaves, so the garden unveils its biggest trick – as the pond comes back into shimmering view. □

Above Subtly underlit York stone steps, which use the same distinctive Petersen bricks of the new extension, link the smart upper terrace with a shadier gravel area that is largely hidden from view on the the upper terrace by the meadow planting. In this shadier area, a largely green planting pallete is lifted by the pale flowers of *Digitalis lutea* and *Aruncus dioicus*.

USEFUL INFORMATION
Find out more about Henrietta's work at **hmw-studio.com**

Creating seclusion in small gardens

• **Don't make the mistake of pushing all your planting to the edges of your plot.** For privacy and seclusion, bring the planting into the centre.
• **Think about tiers and layers of plants,** so you look at and through different heights when seated or standing. Tall plants at the front of a border can help create a sense of depth.
• **Trellis is good for giving immediate privacy** but always use it as a backdrop for planting; you don't just want to be looking at your boundaries.
• **Trees are a must in a small garden** – they offer seasonality, form, interest and privacy. Get as big a specimen as you can, and remember you can sit under them, as well as look at them.
• **Remember that seclusion is about how you feel in a space.** Trees or tall planting can give the illusion of privacy, even if that isn't really the case.

SUCCESSION PLANTING

To mark the centenary of Christopher Lloyd's birth we talk to the talented gardeners who are continuing his legacy of fearless gardening

WORDS JULIET GILES

Christo wasn't interested in change for change's sake. He didn't turn the Rose Garden into the Exotic Garden to make headlines. He didn't do anything for the headlines. He did it because it was it was a natural thing to do.

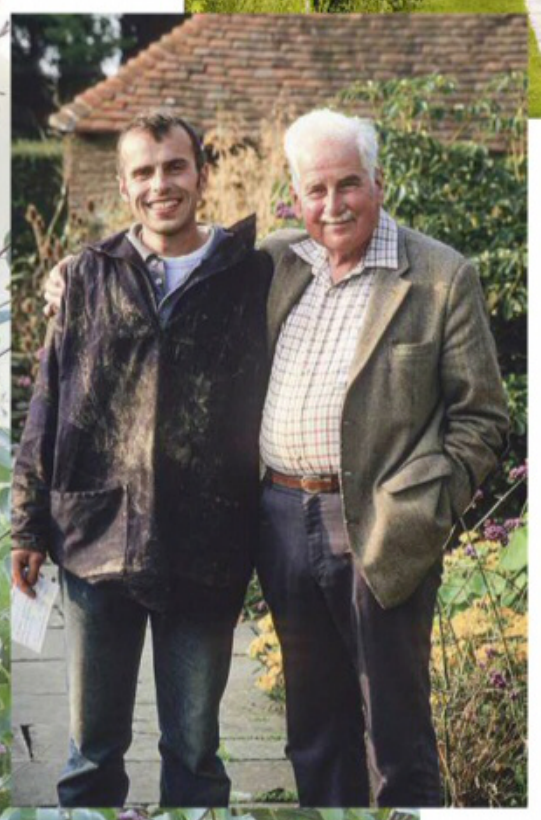
FERGUS GARRETT

Left The Exotic Garden at Great Dixter caused controversy in 1993 when the jungle-like planting replaced Lutyens' Rose Garden.

Right Great Dixter's famous mixed Long Border is deeply layered with shrubs and perennials, and dotted with bulbs and annuals to provide a long season of colour.

Below Head gardener Fergus Garrett with Christopher Lloyd.

Bottom Great Dixter's curving circles of steps, here seen in 1913, were a trademark of the architect Edwin Lutyens, who remodelled the house for Christopher's father.



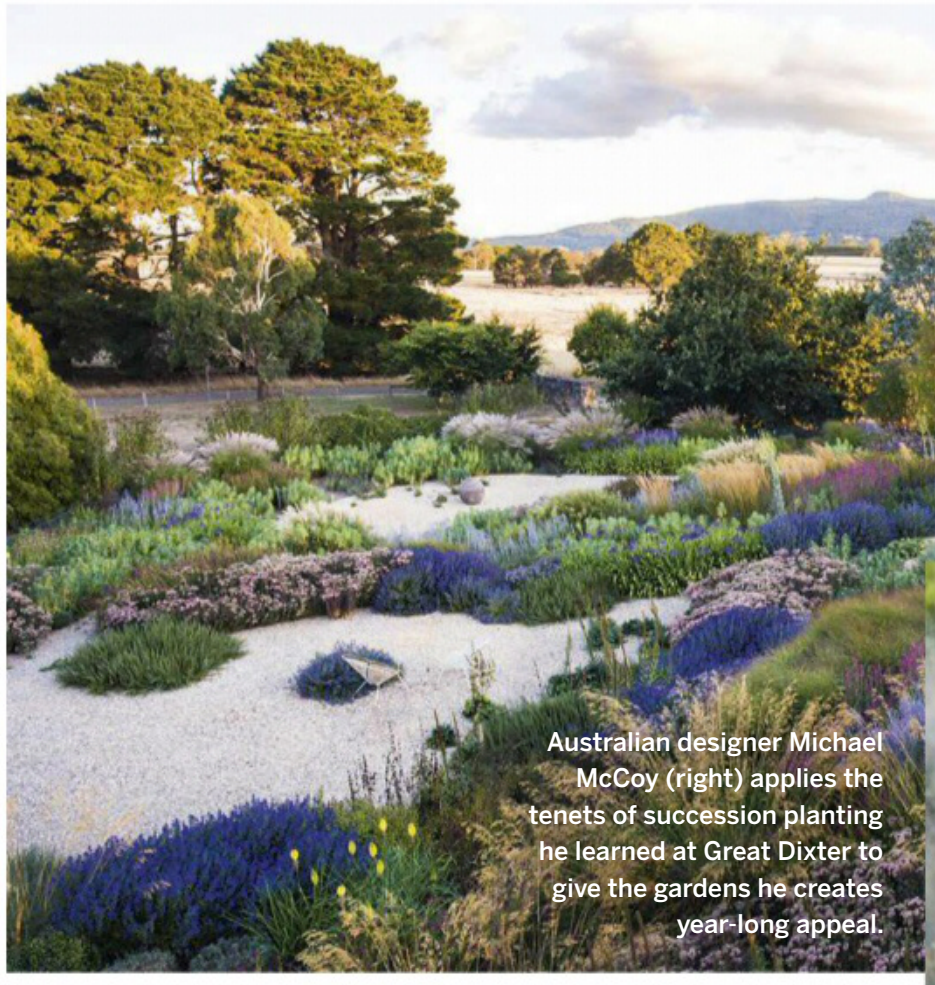
MAIN SHOT AND PORTRAIT JONATHAN BUCKLEY; IMAGE RIGHT COUNTRY LIFE/ FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM; TOP IMAGE ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Christopher Lloyd adored Great Dixter. It's the house where he was born 100 years ago this month and where he lived for almost his entire life. It was also where he gardened wonderfully for almost his entire life. For the past 15 years since he died it has continued to thrive under the guardianship of its long-time head gardener Fergus Garrett. It's certainly Christopher legacy but so too are the gardens and gardeners it has inspired around the world.

Australian designer Michael McCoy recognises that much of the boldness of his planting combinations comes from the time he spent at Great Dixter in 1991. "Christo loosened me up and liberated me from my self-imposed notions of what good gardening looked like," he says. "Working at Dixter made me almost immune to any concerns about failure. Failure was no longer a measure of my poor gardening; failure was an indicator of my experimental nature."

For Michael's friend Edward Flint, Dixter opened a door on to a completely different world. He first came as a 20-year-old student and often found himself sitting down to eat with some of the greatest horticulturists of the day, invited to join in their argument and debate. Everyone could bring an opinion to Christopher's table, provided they could argue their case. Alongside his work as a head gardener in East Sussex, where he gardens in a high-input, high-output style he describes as 'Dixter light', Edward now teaches gardening and tries always to instil that same sense of questioning in his students. "Christo taught me to develop a critical eye," he says. "Not just about plants and gardens but about literature, music, everything. There was so much more to Dixter than just gardens and gardening."

Hannah Gardner also loved the stimulating life at Dixter when as a student she would come and volunteer in the garden. "It was informal and spontaneous, and I thought 'my God this is gardening and it's so much fun'," she says. "The friendship between Fergus and Christo was so productive and vibrant. It was inspiring to think this is what being a head gardener could be." For head gardener Tom Coward, another volunteer student who later returned to the garden as Fergus's deputy, it was that welcoming sense of community at Great Dixter that mattered almost as much as the plants. "It's the people that make Dixter special," he says. "And the atmosphere that has persisted ▷



Australian designer Michael McCoy (right) applies the tenets of succession planting he learned at Great Dixter to give the gardens he creates year-long appeal.

since Christo. He would be overjoyed if he could see what is now being created."

Tom now gardens magnificently at Gravetye Manor Hotel, where he's brought a touch of Dixter magic to his reinterpretation of William Robinson's naturalistic plantings. He's added plenty of his own distinctive style too, but acknowledges Gravetye's roots lie partly in Dixter, and still finds it a lovely compliment when someone tells him they can see he has worked there. "I learned so much from Fergus, especially about flower gardening," he says.

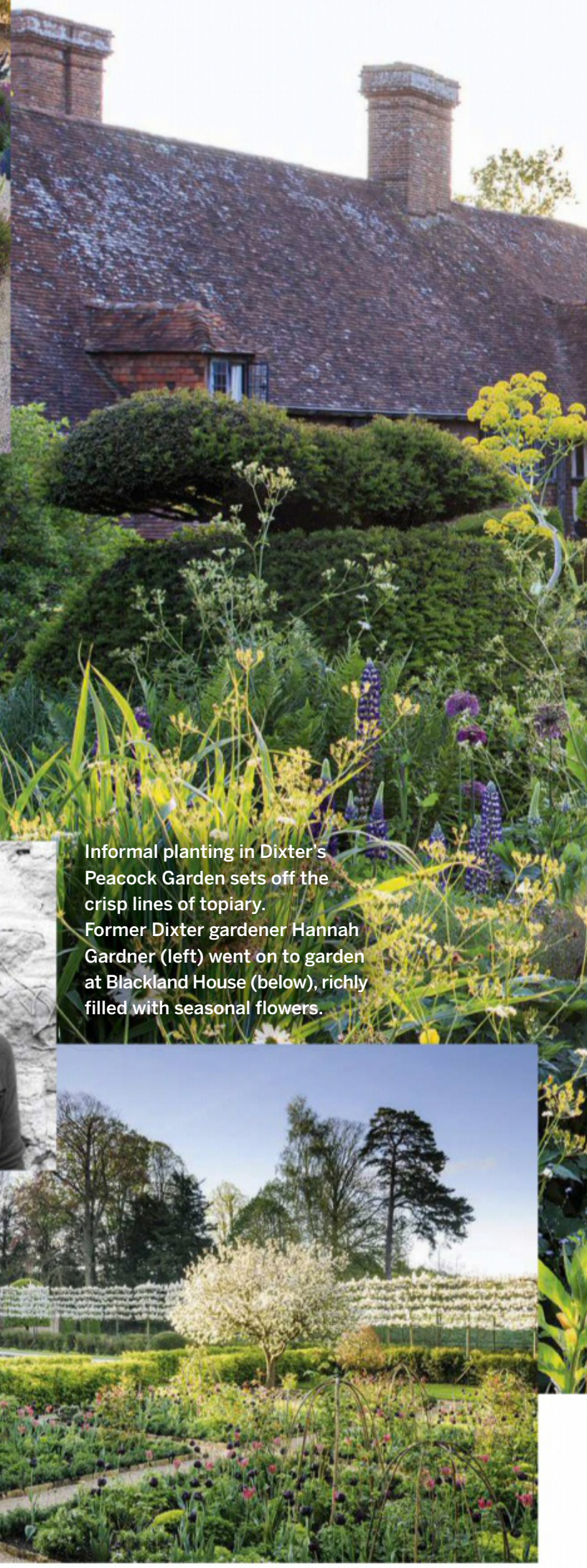
Tom's predecessor as Fergus's deputy, Matthew Reese, fell "head over heels in love" with Dixter on his first visit and always knew it was where he wanted to work. When he finished studying at Kew he asked Fergus for a job for a few months, eventually staying six years, which allowed him to see how cleverly the garden changed through the seasons. "Christo didn't just want a garden to be looking good for that summer climax, he wanted it to earn its keep for as long as possible," he says. "He always wanted to be out there enjoying it and seeing things and, experiencing the ebb and flow of the garden." Matthew is now head gardener at Malverleys [see page 34], a ten-acre, private garden in Hampshire. It's a soft, natural-looking garden with abundant layering of planting that includes, like at Dixter, lots of annuals and spring bulbs. "For me gardening is an artistic outlet," he says. "It's where you manipulate nature and exaggerate it, and play with it and come up with wonderful combinations. If your garden's too rigid and too low maintenance, it's not a garden."

Dixter is still training the head gardeners of tomorrow, and since 2010 has offered a scholarship in Christopher Lloyd's name to talented students. Students get experience in everything from propagation to pruning, as well as the artistry of gardening. "Dixter has a style of generosity. You're encouraged to have fun and just put colours together that appeal to you, That's what Fergus certainly does in the spirit of Christo," says James Horner the first Christopher Lloyd scholar. At Dixter, James was given the opportunity to work alongside the Italian designer Luciano Giubbilei and has since worked as planting designer for Giubbilei on several gardens including his 2014 Best in Show at Chelsea.

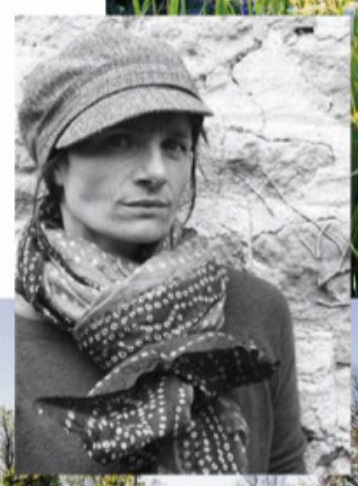
Ed Alderman, the 2013 scholar, found his year at Dixter a confidence-boosting masterclass on how to do the basics

Christo liberated me from my self-imposed notions of what good gardening looked like

MICHAEL McCOY



Informal planting in Dixter's Peacock Garden sets off the crisp lines of topiary. Former Dixter gardener Hannah Gardner (left) went on to garden at Blackland House (below), richly filled with seasonal flowers.

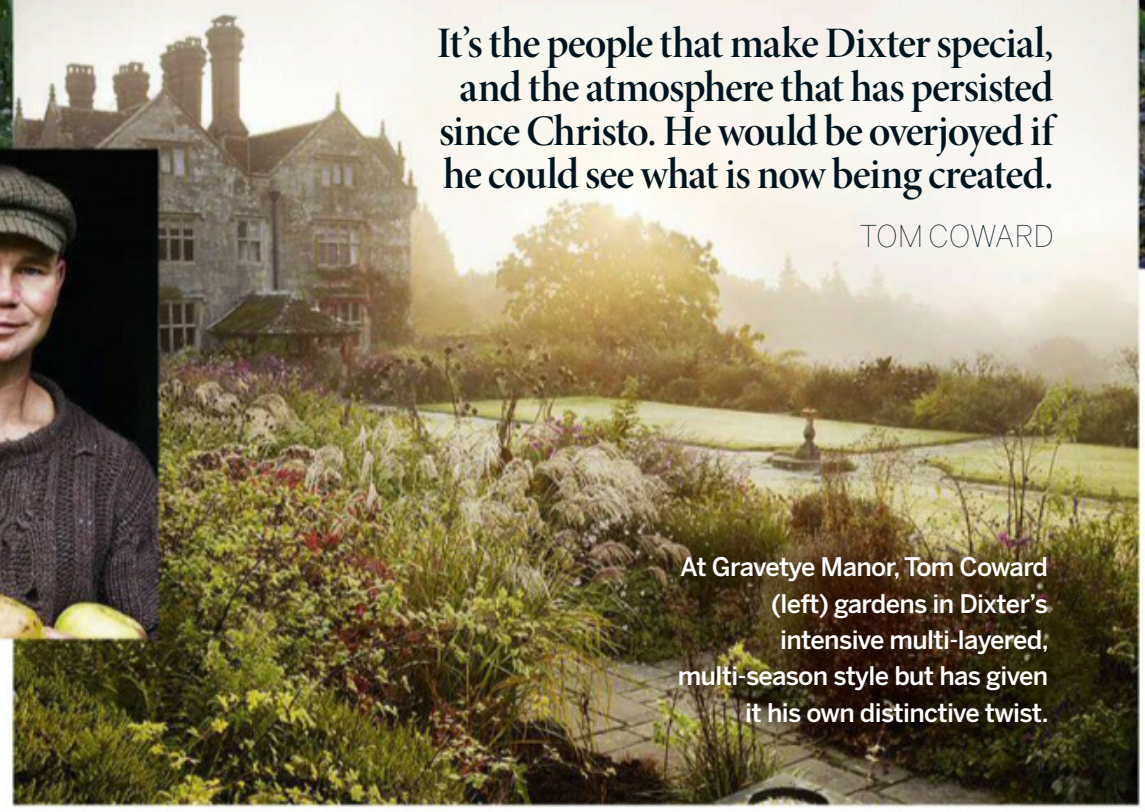


The friendship between Fergus and Christo was so productive and vibrant. It was inspiring to think this is what a head gardener could be.

HANNAH GARDNER

LEFT HAND PAGE: MICHAEL MCCOY IMAGES ALL CLAIRE TAKACS, PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY, BLACKLAND HOUSE IMAGE JASON INGRAM
THIS PAGE: MAIN SHOT CLAIRE TAKACS. IMAGES ALONG BOTTOM ALL ANDREW MONTGOMERY

> It's the people that make Dixter special, and the atmosphere that has persisted since Christo. He would be overjoyed if he could see what is now being created.
>
> TOM COWARD



At Gravetye Manor, Tom Coward (left) gardens in Dixter's intensive multi-layered, multi-season style but has given it his own distinctive twist.

Since leaving Great Dixter, the 2017 Christopher Lloyd scholar Jonny Bruce has spent time working at Hans Kramer's organic nursery in the Netherlands.

Christo didn't just want a garden to be looking good for that summer climax, he wanted it to earn its keep for as long as possible.

MATTHEW REESE

At the gloriously romantic Malverleys in Hampshire Matthew Reese (above) gardens intensively with, in spring, tulips planted between shrubs and perennials in his mixed borders.

Head gardener Edward Flint found his life changed after a summer learning from Christopher Lloyd at Great Dixter in the 1990s. He now lectures in the garden.

MAIN IMAGE CLAIRE TAKACS. PORTRAITS ANDREW MONTGOMERY; FAR LEFT JASON INGRAM

Great Dixter's meadows were a favourite feature of one-time head gardener Romke van de Kaa (right). Christopher later extended the meadow planting to Lutyens' Topiary Lawn.

Dixter has a style of generosity. You're encouraged to have fun and just put colours together that appeal to you. That's what Fergus certainly does in the spirit of Christo.

JAMES HORNER

James Horner the first Christopher Lloyd scholar now trials thousands of plants to observe and learn how they grow with many grown them together like a romantic Dixter stock bed.

One of the greatest lessons Christo taught me was that there's a difference between looking and seeing. He had such an eye for detail. For a writer that's very a useful skill.

AARON BERTELSEN

Aaron Bertelsen in the porch surrounded by an ever-changing display of pots – many of them created by Dixter's students.

TOP AND BOTTOM IMAGES ANDREW MONTGOMERY. PORTRAIT PICASA

▷ well and then push the boundaries. "It showed me anything is possible," he says. "It's a fearless approach." Ed is now head gardener for a private garden, but other scholars have found Dixter opens different doors. Jonny Bruce the 2017 scholar discovered he loved the symbiotic relationship between the garden and nursery at Dixter and now feels his future is in sustainably growing perennials.

Perhaps after Dixter, Christopher Lloyd's greatest legacy is his body of writing. He wrote more than 20 books and for more than 40 years a weekly column for *Country Life* magazine, all full of opinion and wit and astute gardening knowledge. "There aren't many people who can write well about gardening and who are also brilliant gardeners," says the Dutch writer and broadcaster Romke van de Kaa, who was encouraged to write by Christopher while working as Dixter's head gardener in the 1970s. Aaron Bertelsen Dixter's current gardener cook was persuaded to pick up the pen by Christopher. "One of the greatest lessons Christo taught me was that there's a difference between looking and seeing," he says. "He had such an eye for detail. For a writer that's very a useful skill." Aaron has now followed Christopher's lead not just in publishing two books on cooking from the Great Dixter kitchen garden but also in writing a column for this magazine.

Who knows what Christopher Lloyd would have made of the gardens Dixter has inspired; he would surely have had an opinion and one that would be worth seeking out. "It makes me incredibly sad that Christo never saw Malverleys," says Matthew Reese. "I think he would have liked it. Perhaps not everything, I don't think he would liked the White Garden, but I would have loved to have shown it to him and know what he thought." ❑

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Great Dixter, Northiam, Rye, East Sussex TN31 6PH.
Tel 01797 252878. **Web** greatdixter.co.uk

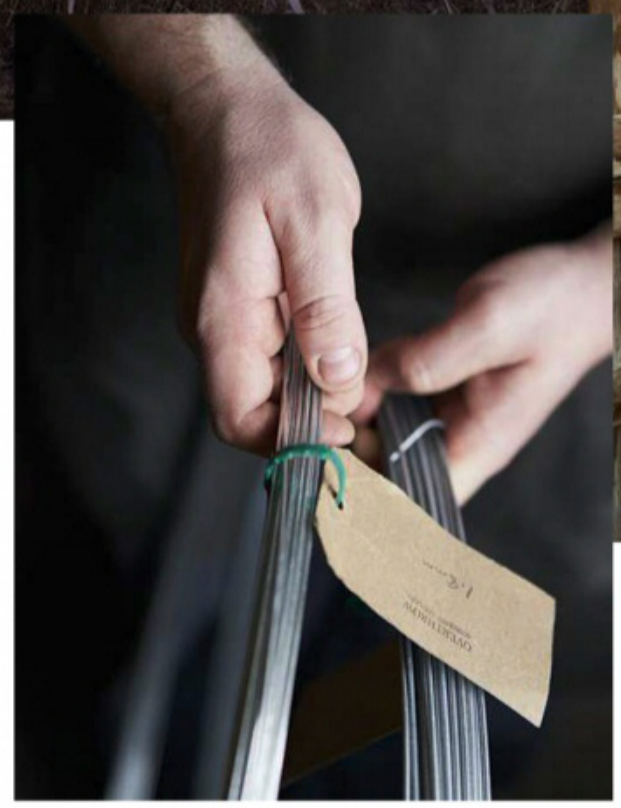
• Great Dixter's head gardener, Fergus Garrett will be leading a *Gardens Illustrated* Masterclass on How to Create Dynamic Border Displays on 28 April at 6pm. Tickets cost £15. For more information and details of how to book visit gardensillustrated.com/masterclass

Made to last

When Steve Overthrow read that the craft of sieve and riddle making had officially died out in Britain, he knew he had to act

WORDS **NATASHA GOODFELLOW** PHOTOGRAPHS **LISA LINDER**

Sieve making is a combination of everything I love – tools, wood and steam bending



Facing page Steve's sieves (featuring a pre-woven mesh) and riddles (with a hand-woven mesh) are made using local ash wood.

Above The natural landscape of Ham Wall Nature Reserve is a source of inspiration for Steve.

Right Steve selects the wire size before he picks the pattern of the mesh. He uses both galvanised steel and copper wires.

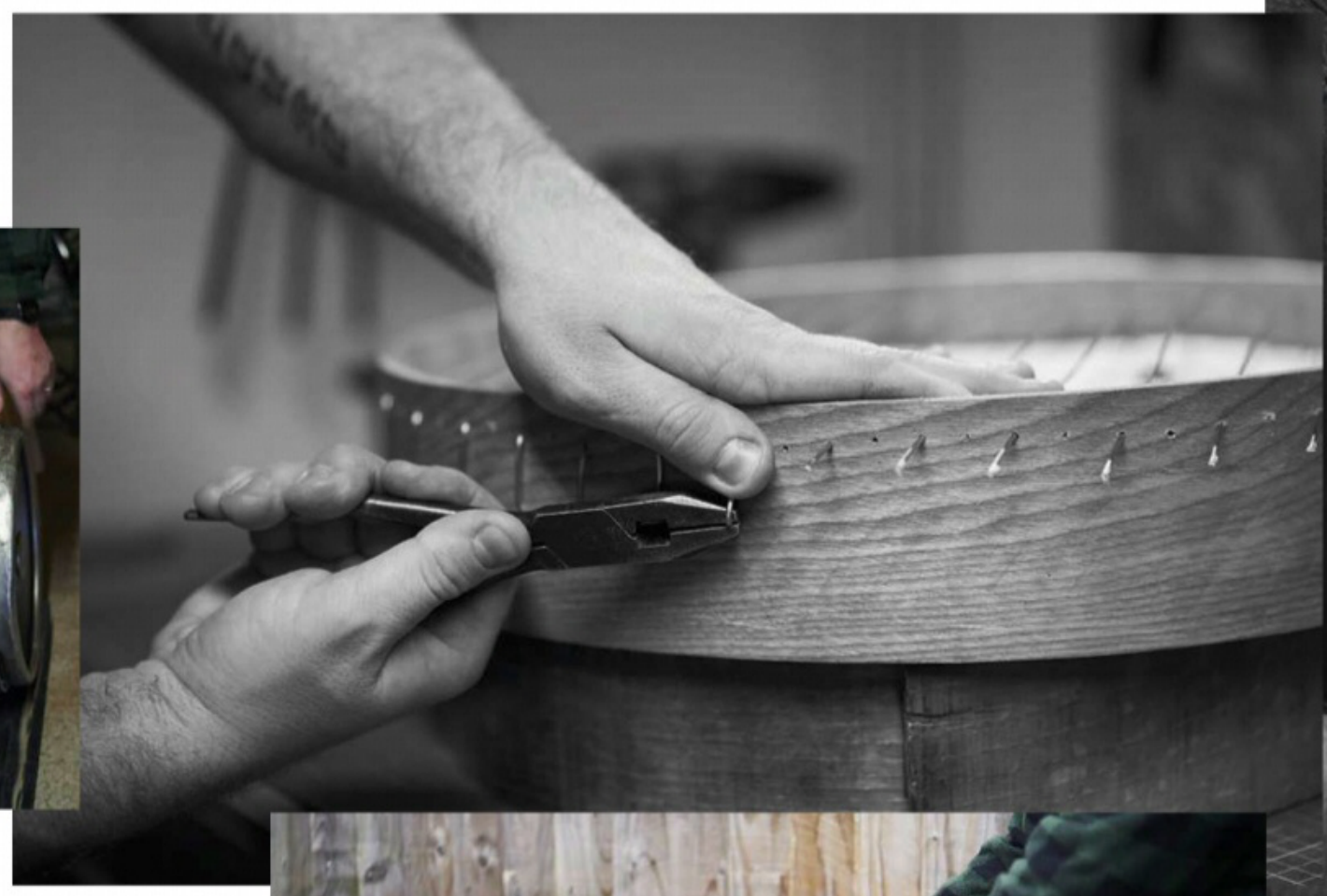
Far right Steve holds a 22-inch (55cm), cockle-fishing riddle of the type he sells to in-shore fishermen around the country.

Not so long ago, sieve making was big business. Farmers needed sieves to sift grain; miners used riddles (a sieve with a coarser, handwoven mesh) to sort coal; bakers used them, and of course gardeners would have had several to hand for preparing seed trays, sifting compost or for ridding their soil of stones. Most of these demands still exist, but the skill of sieve and riddle making has all but died out, replaced, like so many things, by automated machinery or by low-quality, often plastic, replacements that might be cheap to buy once but are not made to last.

This is anathema to Steve Overthrow, a former vintage-car mechanic and amateur woodturner with a passion for well-made tools, old machinery and the Victorian era – and in particular the technique of steam bending, something he'd seen practised by Owen Jones, an oak swill basket maker on the BBC's *Victorian Farm* series in 2009.

It's no surprise then that in 2017, when Steve read that the craft of sieve making was officially extinct, his interest was piqued. "I started researching immediately," he says. "It's a combination of everything I love – tools, wood and steam bending. I was really keen to have a go."

When Steve was made redundant just a week later, a plan started to form. He believed enough in handmade tools to think it could be a business, but first he had to make a sieve. "Wood doesn't bend naturally," he says, "it has to be manipulated, and I created huge piles of firewood in the process." It wasn't just the sieves he had to make. Since he was ▷



Above Steve rolls the steamed wood around various forms – here an old Guinness keg – to achieve the desired diameter.

Above right The warp wires of the riddle are individually pulled through and secured before the weft wires are added to form the mesh. A tool called a crook separates the warp wires to make this easier.

Right A long, plywood box with a wallpaper-stripper pump at one end serves as Steve's steam bender into which the strips of ash are placed and left until they are pliable.

▷ starting from scratch, he had to engineer all his own tools as well – no problem for a man inspired by the Victorians' spirit of invention. A long, plywood box with a wallpaper-stripper pump at one end serves as his steam bender, into which he places strips of ash wood, sourced from the hills around his workshop in Langport, Somerset. Once these have the necessary flex, they are placed on a piece of conveyor belt and rolled around one of a number of improvised forms – from an old Guinness keg to a can of baby formula – to give them the desired diameter. A customised patio scraper has become Steve's 'crook', which he uses to separate the warp wires of his riddle meshes, once attached to the hoops, to enable him to thread through the weft.

Other processes have benefited from the advice and encouragement of Mike Turnock, a retired riddle maker with whom Steve connected after Mike's sister saw a post online about Steve's sieves. "He's given me help with things I couldn't possibly have researched," says Steve. "He's taught me about the grades of the wire, and showed me how to make the tightening tool that I use after I've woven the mesh."

As word of his skill has spread, so too has his customer base, which now includes ceramicists (who need sieves with a very fine mesh) to shellfishermen who use them to collect cockles and shrimp, alongside coffee lovers who need small sieves to sprinkle chocolate on their brews. Steve is proud to be a member of the Heritage Crafts Association and The Guild of Master Craftsmen, and every one of his models is designed to last a lifetime, a quality recognised by one buyer who advised Steve to incorporate some faults to keep himself in business. "There's quite a few people on the Earth," smiles Steve, "I'm sure that won't be a problem." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Contact details sievesandriddles.co.uk; 07564 478503.

Steve is planning to offer a sieve and riddle making course at The Old Kennels in Dunkeswell, Devon, 27-28 April. For more information, see theoldkennels.co.uk

Wood doesn't bend naturally, it has to be manipulated, and I created a huge pile of firewood in the process

Above Each of Steve's sieves and riddles comes with a handmade, signed label detailing a description of the product and the date it was made.

Left An array of hoops (used for the top of the sieves) and batts (the lower part), between which the pre-woven meshes are sandwiched. Large-diameter sieves may also have support wires added underneath the mesh.

Far right This 18-inch (45cm) riddle with a 1cm mesh is the most common size for garden jobs – used to sift stones and twigs out of growing beds.

Right Steve has dozens of different mesh patterns, which he nails to a tool to act as a guide for placing the wires.

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Garden of Medicinal Plants – Chelsea Physic Garden Photo: R Alexander

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IMPACTFUL PLANTING

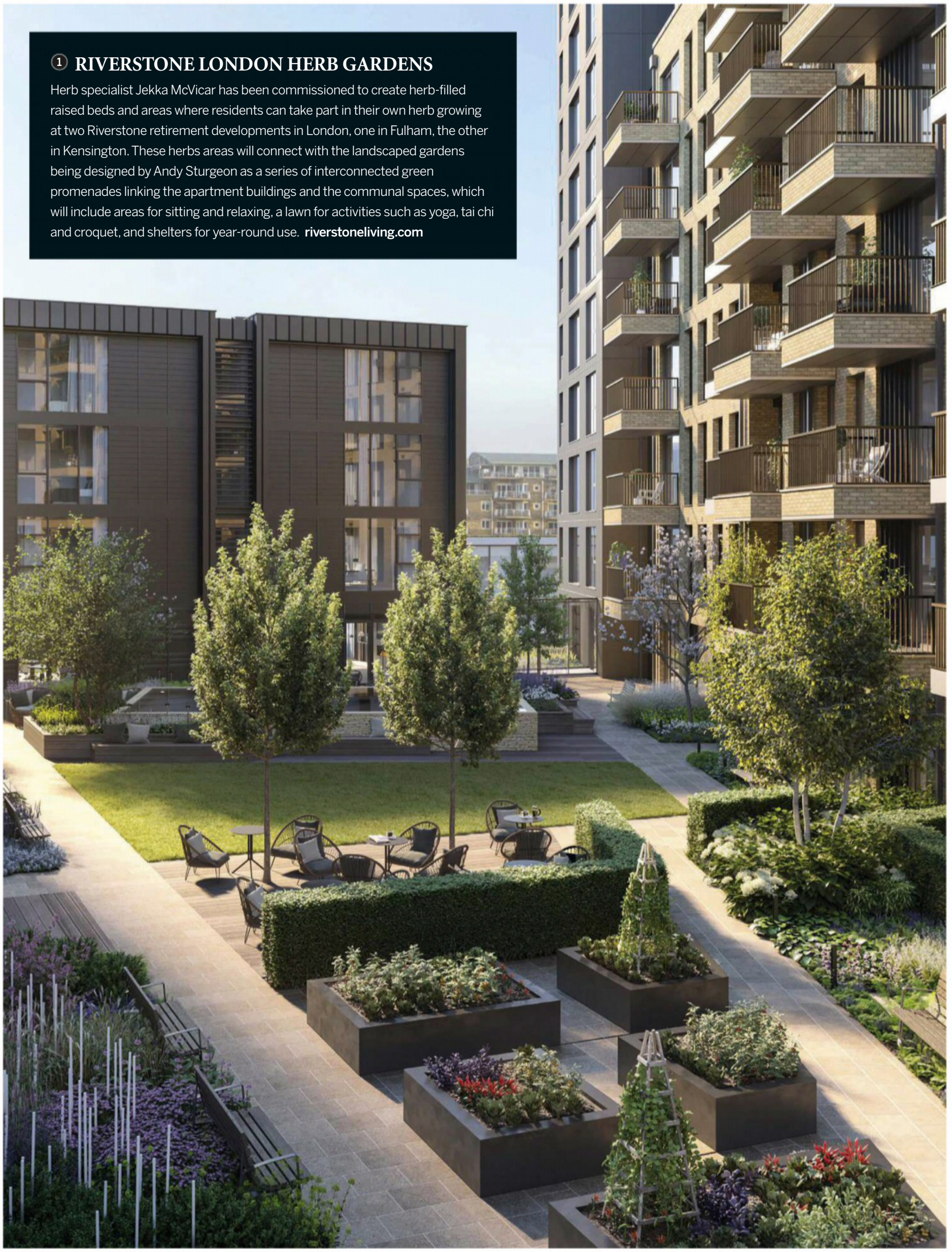
An informal front garden on an exposed site on the west coast of Scotland designed by Rachel Bailey has won a Pro Landscaper Small Project Big Impact award for a scheme with a £25,000 budget. She used the existing builders' rubble on the site as a substrate for plants that thrive in a low-fertility medium with sharp drainage, such as the pink sedum *Hylotelephium* 'Matrona' and yellow yarrow *Achillea* Anthea (= 'Anblo'). The planting was inspired by the landscape of the Cowal Peninsula and large boulders were introduced to increase the naturalistic feel and provide planting pockets for alpines. Gravel mulch was used as a dressing and weed suppressant. **rachelbaileydesign.co.uk**

News

COMPILED BY ANNIE GATTI

1 RIVERSTONE LONDON HERB GARDENS

Herb specialist Jekka McVicar has been commissioned to create herb-filled raised beds and areas where residents can take part in their own herb growing at two Riverstone retirement developments in London, one in Fulham, the other in Kensington. These herbs areas will connect with the landscaped gardens being designed by Andy Sturgeon as a series of interconnected green promenades linking the apartment buildings and the communal spaces, which will include areas for sitting and relaxing, a lawn for activities such as yoga, tai chi and croquet, and shelters for year-round use. **riverstoneliving.com**



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2 LANDSCAPE INSTITUTE DESIGN COMPETITION

Landscape architect Adam Greatrix from Gillespies' Leeds studio and graphic designer Hilary Barber have won the Landscape Institute's design competition for transforming the urban landscape. Back Down to Earth reimagines the typical urban street as a biodiverse space that copes with the challenges of climate change. The design incorporates recycled plastic road surface, biodiverse planting, rainwater management, rooftop hydroponic crop growing and inflatable canopies that create lightweight, low-carbon shelters. **landscapeinstitute.org**

3 RUSSIAN RENAISSANCE

LDA Design has won an international competition to redesign Gorky Central Park on the banks of the Yenisei River in Krasnoyarsk. One of Siberia's largest cities, Krasnoyarsk was originally laid out in 1828 and has a mix of settings and historic features. The winning scheme transforms the underused park into a destination for all ages. Trees native to the Taiga will rewild the site, and new features will include a new viewing tower, a sculpture park, museum, stalls for winter markets and an ice rink. The project has been developed with MAP architects and Sarner. **lda-design.co.uk**

4 NATURE COMES TO NOTTINGHAM

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust has teamed up with landscape architects Influence to reimagine the demolished Broadmarsh shopping centre site in Nottingham as a green space where people can connect with nature. The scheme's interconnecting wildlife habitats reflect the site's history as a wetland alongside the ancient course of the River Leen. The scheme, which has been submitted to Nottingham City Council for consideration, would help to cut carbon emissions and act as a springboard to reconnect the city to Sherwood Forest. **nottinghamshirewildlife.org**

5 PEACE AND CALM FOR PETERHOUSE

Plans for a redesign by Tom Hoblyn of Cosin Court and its adjoining spaces at the Cambridge college Peterhouse, have been revealed. Interlinking gardens will provide spaces that instil a sense of wellbeing. A rill water feature inspired by Hobson's Conduit, which has brought fresh water into Cambridge since 1574, will frame reed beds, ornamental planting and seating areas in the main courtyard, while a pergola will lead to a woodland glade, orchard and wildflower meadow. Biodiverse planting and rainwater harvesting will help ensure the sustainability of the gardens. **pet.cam.ac.uk**

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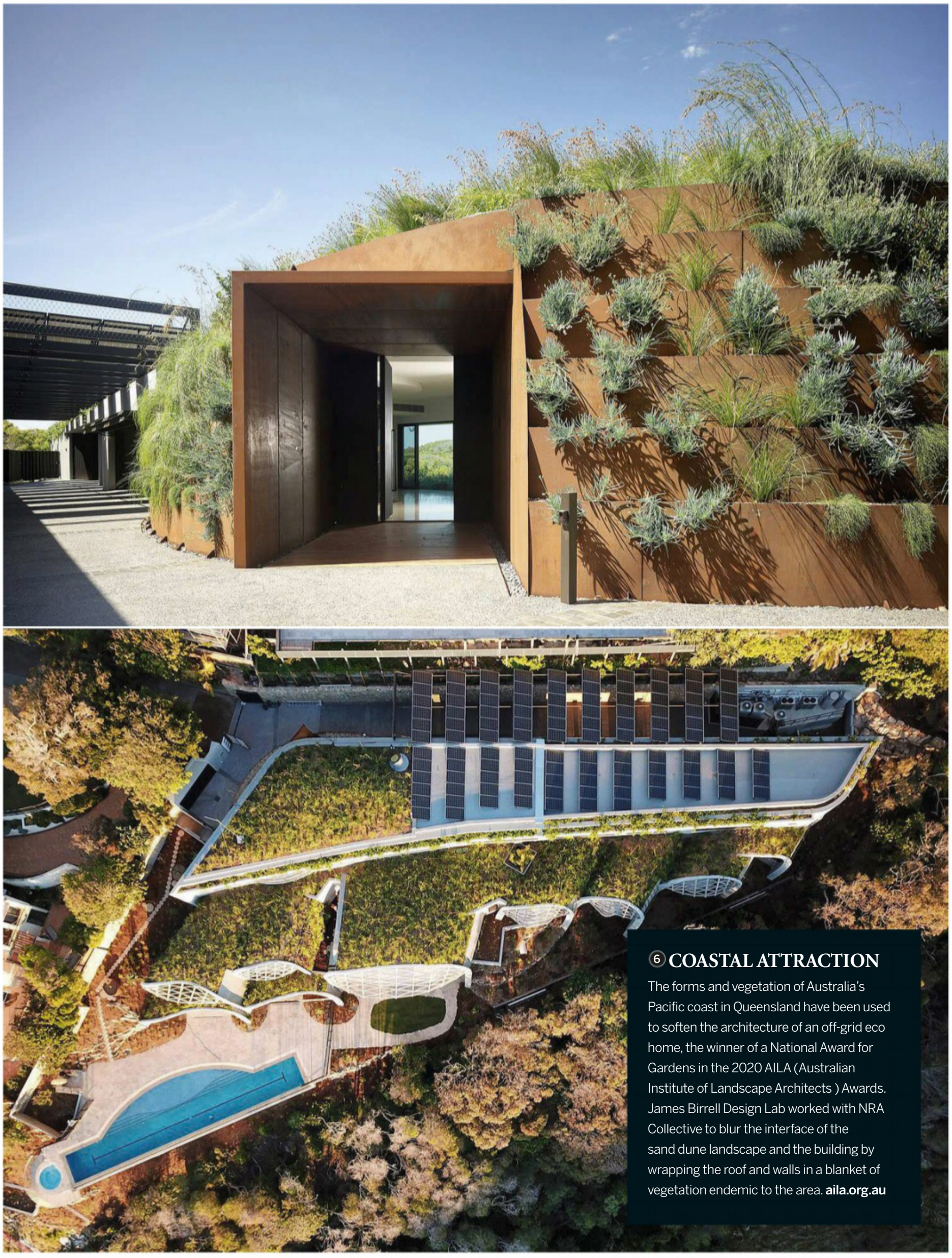

6 COASTAL ATTRACTION

The forms and vegetation of Australia's Pacific coast in Queensland have been used to soften the architecture of an off-grid eco home, the winner of a National Award for Gardens in the 2020 AILA (Australian Institute of Landscape Architects) Awards. James Birrell Design Lab worked with NRA Collective to blur the interface of the sand dune landscape and the building by wrapping the roof and walls in a blanket of vegetation endemic to the area. **aila.org.au**

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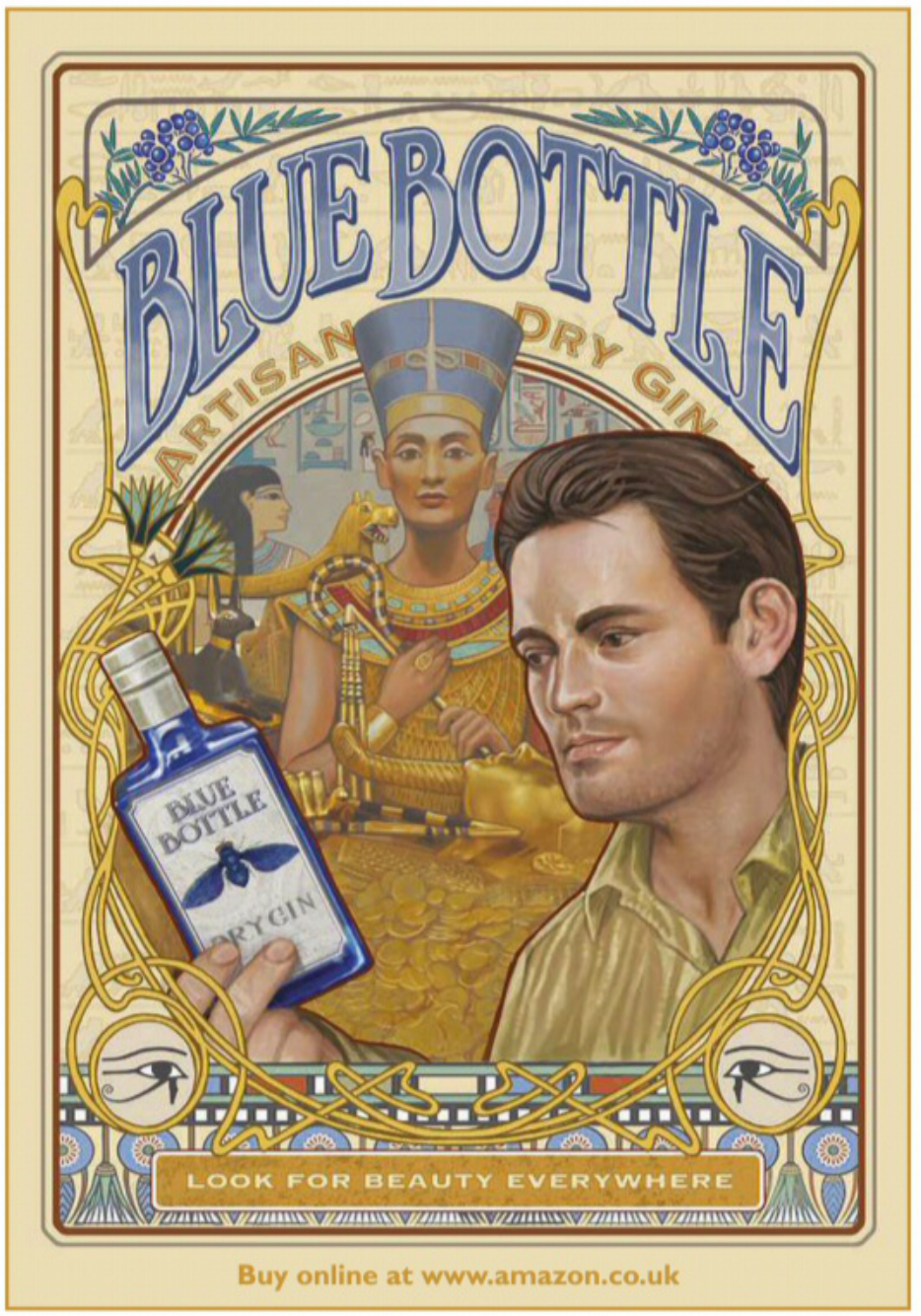

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JONATHAN BUCKLEY

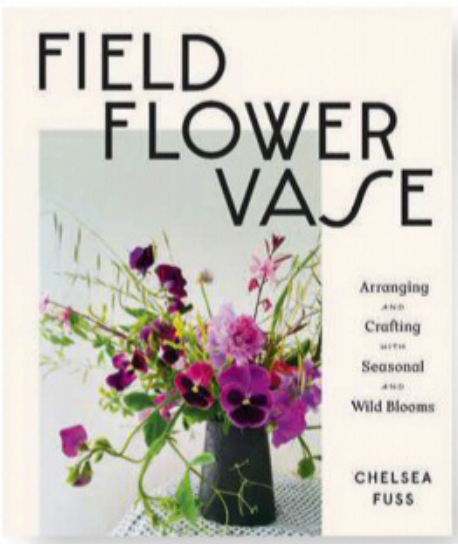
Some of the best daffodils for cutting from Sarah Raven's 2019 trial, including, from left, 'Blushing Lady', 'Pink Charm', 'Bell Song' and 'Katie Heath', are revealed in her new book *A Year Full of Flowers*, reviewed on page 109.

GROW: PRUNING & TRAINING
by Stephanie Mahon

DK Publishing, £9.99
ISBN 978-0241458600

While there's no replacement for experience, this book brilliantly tackles its subject, offering expert knowledge on how to make the right cut.

Reviewer Benjamin William Pope is a head gardener and writer.



FIELD, FLOWER, VASE: ARRANGING AND CRAFTING WITH SEASONAL AND WILD BLOOMS
by Chelsea Fuss

Abrams, £21.99
ISBN 978-1419743962

Enhance your wellbeing via a wildflower-filled journey through the Portuguese countryside with naturalistic floral designer Chelsea Fuss.

Reviewer Sonya Patel Ellis is a writer, editor and artist.

Whenever I teach, a topic that students always question is that of pruning. Of course, there are the basic principles to follow, but these change depending on plant type, situation and desired outcome. The various options that present themselves often lead to confusion and in the classroom, there is never enough time to go through every scenario. Inevitably, the lesson will end with requests for book recommendations.

In DK's latest addition, *Grow: Pruning and Training*, author Stephanie Mahon tackles this subject perfectly. The book is split into two main sections. The first gently introduces the subject matter in layman's terms, giving the reader a general overview of why, what, when and how to prune. In the pages that follow, defined segments describe in detail the various aspects of pruning and training, while gradually introducing the reader to more technical terms and information. The text is clear and concise, supported by useful illustrations and images.

The second section of the book is an A to Z of plants, perfect for reference and specific instruction. Here, information from the first section is applied to various plants types, guiding you though the decision-making process of where to cut and what to leave. Again, informative images and illustrations complement the text superbly and help to demystify the art of pruning. Throughout the book, Mahon demonstrates her own practical experience, offering expert tips that may seem obvious when mentioned, but are all too often overlooked.

In reality, great pruning takes time to perfect, gaining the practical experience and understanding to confidently make the right choices. However, this book is a fantastic introduction for anyone wanting to begin that journey, or an expert companion for those of us who want to remind ourselves of the correct path.

Flower arranging can be as much about the therapeutic process of gathering and placement as it is the artistry. Floral designer and founder of the hugely popular Frolic flower school, Chelsea Fuss encapsulates this philosophy perfectly in her first book *Field, Flower, Vase*, a beautifully illustrated meditation on 'arranging and crafting with seasonal and wild blooms'.

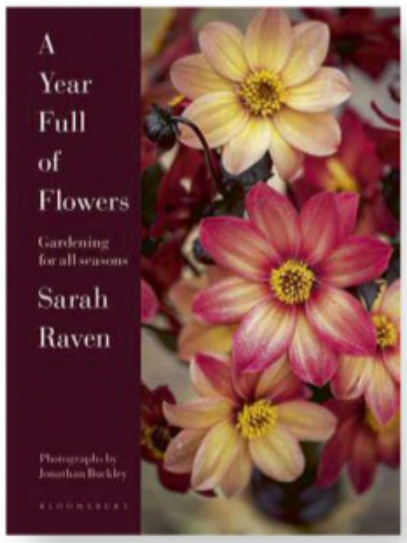
An ideal companion for those turning to nature during uncertain times, Fuss imparts the foundations of floristry via a tour of her idyllic abode in the small Portuguese village of Sintra and the wilds of the surrounding countryside. It's an inspiring journey that places as much emphasis on foraging for and becoming familiar with the specific characteristics of local and seasonal flowers and greenery as it does on styling a floral display.

Fuss also encourages readers to embrace and accept the beauty of imperfection. In some cases, it might work to remove a dead flower in order for another one to bloom; in others, the fragility of a decaying petal might just add to the narrative.

A long-standing advocate of an increasingly popular naturalistic style, Fuss clearly explains how to gather, cut and condition flowers from the wild, with tips on sourcing from local farmers' markets and flower shops. This is about as far as you can get from the old days of flower arranging with floral foam, but Fuss certainly doesn't lack in technique, providing environmentally friendly, insider tips on creating long-lasting, compositionally arresting designs.

Readers can put their knowledge into practice via over 30 step-by-step projects designed to bring nature and wellbeing into every part of the home. From 'Wild Roses for the Desk' and a 'Culinary Herb and Flower Swag', to a 'Sweet Dreams Garland' and 'Bathing Branches', it's an uplifting, multi-sensory guide to a more flower-filled life.

BOOK REVIEWS

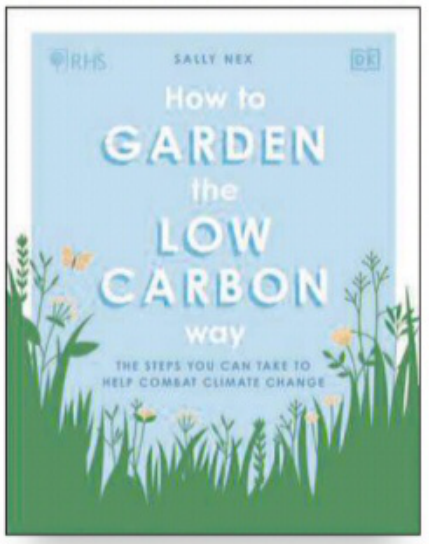


A YEAR FULL OF FLOWERS
by Sarah Raven,
photographs by Jonathan Buckley

Bloomsbury, £25
ISBN 978-1526626110

A beautifully photographed book combining inspiration with advice for gardeners and dreamers to create their own year-round, flower-filled garden.

Reviewer Charlie Ryrie is a florist and stylist.



HOW TO GARDEN THE LOW CARBON WAY
by Sally Nex

RHS/DK, £12.99
ISBN 978-0241472972

A timely guide on how to improve every garden's environmental credentials and bring the fight against climate change a little closer to home.

Reviewer Jonny Bruce is a plantsman and garden writer.

Part of the joy of gardening is dreaming about it. As Sarah Raven leads us from January to December through her boldly colourful gardens at Perch Hill, we suspect that such a garden will remain in the dream realm for many of us, but this book is also satisfyingly practical.
For more than 20 years, the author and grower has been seeking out the best plant performers, trialling hundreds of varieties for structure, colour, staying power, scent and flower, and discovering where they want to grow and who they like to chum up with. The result is a series of constantly changing arenas where Raven's plants mingle and perform like fabulous divas and their well-dressed guests, with constant changes of clothes to keep the drama coming. It is not easy to keep a garden interesting through all seasons, but Raven freely shares suggestions, distilled from her continual experimentation.

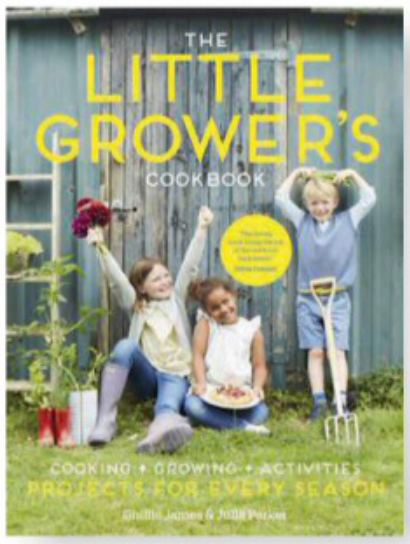
The book majors on show-stopping annuals, bulbs and biennials, plus roses for cutting. All her choices are deliberately easy to grow, nothing tricksy – apart from the wildflower meadow, which she admits is a long-term work in progress. Monthly tasks include straightforward advice on sowing, planting, pruning and taking cuttings, with plenty of ideas for planting in pots, and for practical plant supports.
I was intrigued by the fact that very few of her rose choices matched those in my own established cutting gardens, and although I couldn't easily follow the rose-training diagrams, anyone who put a flower in a vase could benefit from her sound cutting and conditioning advice.

Few readers will have the time, space or help to create such a dramatic sweep of ever-changing colour, but anyone could try some of Raven's outstanding seasonal suggestions, from irises and narcissi through tulips and alliums to sweet peas, dahlias and chrysanthemums, plus a host of others. And we can all keep dreaming.

Gardens, for those lucky enough to have them, have been a saving grace since the global pandemic hit, and increasingly people are looking for ways to make them more ecological and wildlife-friendly. Sally Nex has teamed up with the RHS and DK to produce a timely guide on how the average gardener can improve their climate credentials.
Despite efforts to raise awareness over issues around growing in peat, there is a long way to go before horticulture can be considered a 'green industry'. Industrial nurseries consume vast amounts of energy to heat greenhouses and provide additional lighting, and most continue to use pesticides and herbicides.
While pressure is required for broader systemic change in our industry, Nex's guide lays out a road map for turning this tide from your own back garden. As she reassuringly suggests, 'A billion tiny actions have brought us to a point where the planet teeters on the edge of environmental crisis. And a billion tiny actions can pull us back from the brink.'

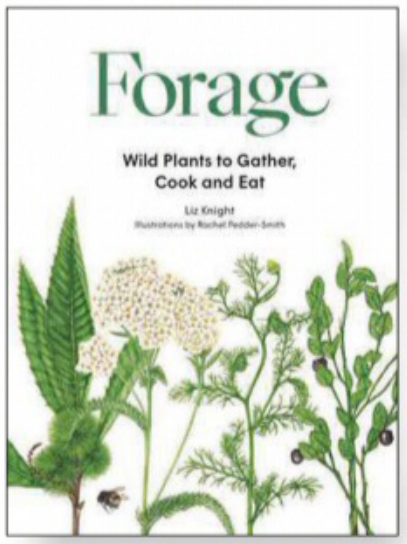
This might seem trivial in the face of industrial inaction, but Nex highlights the surprisingly large contribution made by UK gardens in sequestering over 62 million tonnes of carbon. She proceeds to suggest myriad ways in which this can be improved, from the basic techniques of how to make your own compost to more adventurous upcycling of a second-hand computer fan as part of a DIY greenhouse heating system.

The broad-sweep approach of this guide inevitably leaves some entries feeling a little light but there is a useful page of further resources for those who wish to go deeper. An admirable attempt has been made to print the book in an environmentally friendly way, but I can't help feeling that its visual appeal has suffered as a result. While many of the methods will not be new to the average gardener, it is undoubtedly useful to have them all assembled in this convenient, bite-sized guide.



THE LITTLE GROWER'S COOKBOOK
by Ghillie James and Julia Parker

Lettuce Publishing, £20
ISBN 978-1916373914



FORAGE: WILD PLANTS TO GATHER, COOK AND EAT
by Liz Knight, illustrations by Rachel Pedder-Smith

Laurence King, £19.99
ISBN 978-1786277350

A gardening cookery book for children, brimming with projects, recipes and activities to capture young imaginations and inspire budding growers.

Reviewer Rosanna Morris is a freelance writer.

A foraging and cooking guide that will upend any preconceptions you may have and help you see wild ingredients in a new and delicious light.

Reviewer Lia Leendertz is a garden writer.

Gardening goes hand in hand with cooking, and there are few things more satisfying than preparing a meal using homegrown produce. And so this book, which encourages children to make the connection between what grows in the ground to what is on their supper plate, is sure to cultivate joy for such a wholesome pleasure.

Julia Parker, who runs gardening workshops in Sussex, and Ghillie James, a food writer, have combined their expertise to create this gardening cookbook for children. It shows young gardeners how much fun it can be to grow fruit and vegetables and how simple it is to cook what they've grown.

The first chapter covers gardening basics, and is followed by three chapters on growing, cooking and activities. The planting projects are split into seasons and include growing carrots, tomatoes, garlic and leeks in kooky containers, from sand-castle buckets to wellies and old used tins. Growing strawberries in hanging baskets to make 'strawberry clouds' is one of the loveliest ideas. Each project includes growing time, an equipment checklist and instructions on sowing, growing and harvesting, as well as 'little grower's' facts and tips and 'let's get cooking' links to recipes.

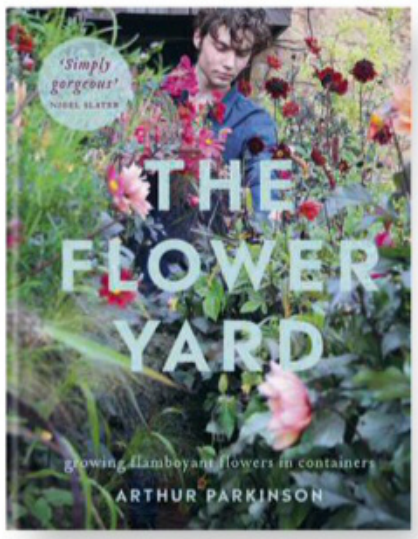
The second half of the book has the recipes. Gardener's cake, rainbow rolls, kale crisps, and pumpkin, feta and courgette fritters are sure to tempt even the fussiest of eaters. The book rounds off with a selection of activities involving garden plants, from making magical flower potions to decorating seed envelopes.

This is an educational and inspiring book with charming photography. The step-by-step guides are simple and clear and some of the information is aimed at novice gardener adults as much as children. What is particularly of note in this book is the concept of one's responsibility for the natural world – there is a strong focus on recycling, reusing, caring for wildlife and eating sustainable, seasonal food.

Liz Knight is a forager extraordinaire and exactly the person that you want guiding you through the mysterious world of wild shoots and leaves. Through her business, Forage Fine Foods – which creates sold-out feasts and has products on the shelves at Fortnum & Mason – she creates delicious things from wild plants. This is not something we always expect from foraging, which has a bit of a worthy image, all nettle soup and miscellaneous chutneys. Liz's mission seems to be to gently but firmly turn that perception on its head, and this book will very likely do the trick.

Forage has a pleasingly straightforward layout, which gives it the feel of a reference book and makes it easy to navigate. Each section is dedicated to a different class of plant – trees, shrubs and climbers, perennials, biennials, annuals – and each plant has a double-page spread of description and botanical, historical and medicinal information, and contains a clear, botanical-style illustration by Rachel Pedder-Smith. A second spread on each plant is filled with recipes. So many of the ingredients are daunting to the newcomer, and yet a glance at these pages makes you long for their season to come around so that you can get picking, plucking and experimenting. For example, recipes for wild cherry include cherry and meadowsweet clafoutis, pickled Japanese cherry blossom (*sakura*), and sour cherry drink (*sharbat e albaloo*). It feels brave to start the book with trees, their leaves and twigs being perhaps the least approachable of wild ingredients, but Knight does so with total confidence, and I'm now itching to make myself some beech leaf and maple liqueur. This book has fed my interest in foraging and I am certain it is set to become a permanent, well-thumbed and well-splattered resident of my kitchen bookshelf.

BOOK REVIEWS



THE FLOWER YARD: GROWING FLAMBOYANT FLOWERS IN CONTAINERS
by Arthur Parkinson

Octopus, £22
ISBN 978-0857839176

An inspirational guide to gardening in the smallest of spaces from an author whose writing is as unashamedly ebullient as his dazzling displays.

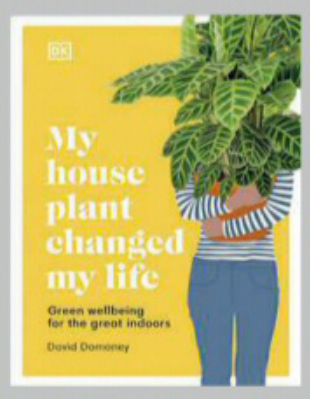
Reviewer Rory Dusoir is a Kew-trained gardener and writer.

Arthur Parkinson's *The Flower Yard* is a record, in his own words and photographs, of the flower garden he has created in the tiny plot in front of his mother's house in Nottingham. Here, he has devoted his extravagant creativity to an entirely paved space barely large enough to call a garden; his collection of dolly tubs, tin baths and terracotta pots are crammed annually with a carefully orchestrated succession of tulips, dahlias, grasses, sweet peas and gourds. Lamenting the march of urbanisation, the loss of nettle patches and apple trees in neighbours' gardens to sterile acres of mown grass and patios, Parkinson sees his small, exuberant patch as an antidote to suburban sterility, buzzing with colour and insect life, and gleefully visited by various temporarily imported fowl.

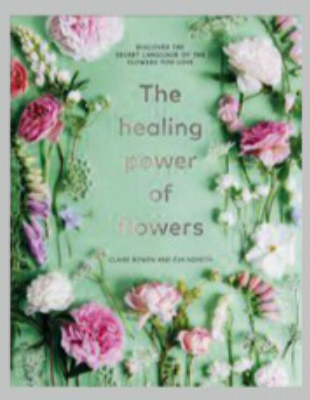
The author, an aesthete whose whippet-thin frame occasionally graces the flamboyant scenes he photographs, writes with an extravagance to match his gardening style, piling simile upon simile inhabited by a bewildering array of flamingos, sea anemones and daytime television personalities. He is refreshingly honest about the amount of work required to produce his bedding displays, which revolve around tulips in the spring and dahlias in high summer, with the gap in June filled by alliums, foxtail lilies and oriental poppies, the majestic foliage of the cardoon presiding over all. But the book will be a huge encouragement to those who feel that a lack of space and facilities inhibits their horticultural aspirations. Parkinson has mounted his gorgeous floral displays without the benefit of a greenhouse, and a detailed chapter on practical matters such as making the best use of windowsill space for sowing seed will be invaluable to anyone who would like to make the effort. The author's personality, a strong sense of place and a passion for the environment shine throughout the pages of this lovely book.

Other books

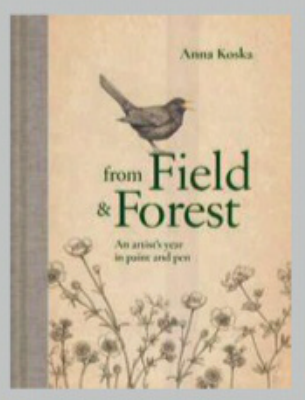
Liven yourself up with houseplants, create seasonal bouquets to match your mood, or lose yourself in the beauty of nature.



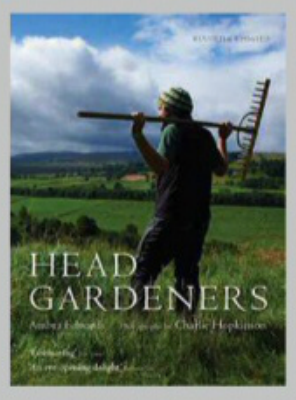
MY HOUSEPLANT CHANGED MY LIFE
by David Domoney, £9.99, DK, ISBN 978-0241458518
Using scientific research, this book shows us how houseplants can improve our mental wellbeing through colour, scent, habit and nurturing needs.



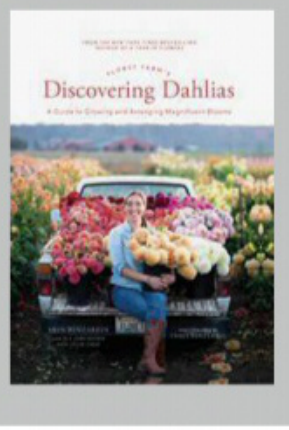
THE HEALING POWER OF FLOWERS
by Claire Bowen and Eva Nemeth, £12.99, Ebury Press, ISBN 978-1529108132
Learn the traditional meanings and holistic benefits of blooms grouped by their purpose – for love, joy, luck, calm, consolation and celebration.



FROM FIELD & FOREST: AN ARTIST'S YEAR IN PAINT AND PEN
by Anna Koska, £14.99, Pavilion Books, ISBN 978-1911641766
A lyrical book in the style of a journal, celebrating the natural world and changing seasons with beautifully detailed illustrations.



HEAD GARDENERS
by Ambra Edwards, £20, Pimpernel Press, ISBN 978-1910258323
An updated edition of the 2017 award-winning book, featuring two new head gardeners: Fiona Dennis of Charleston Farmhouse and Stephen Griffith of Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens.



DISCOVERING DAHLIAS
by Erin Benzakein, £18.99, Chronicle Books, ISBN 978-1452181752
Expert advice for choosing, planting, harvesting and arranging your own dahlias from American florist Erin Benzakein. With over 350 cultivars, this is a must for dahlia lovers.

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Derry Watkins is one of Britain's best and most passionate nurserypeople. The Special Plants Nursery near Bath offers a carefully chosen selection of more unusual garden-worthy plants and there are always seasonal highlights to be discovered. Special Plants Nursery also an online shop that allows gardeners to browse a great range of seeds, many of which will have been collected by Derry herself.

If you've been inspired by our favourites seeds to sow feature on page 66, here's an opportunity to try your hand at growing some stunning plants yourself. Derry stocks a number of the seeds chosen by our designers meaning you can create your very own *Gardens Illustrated* designer favourites display – and once you've tried them, we hope they'll become your favourites too.

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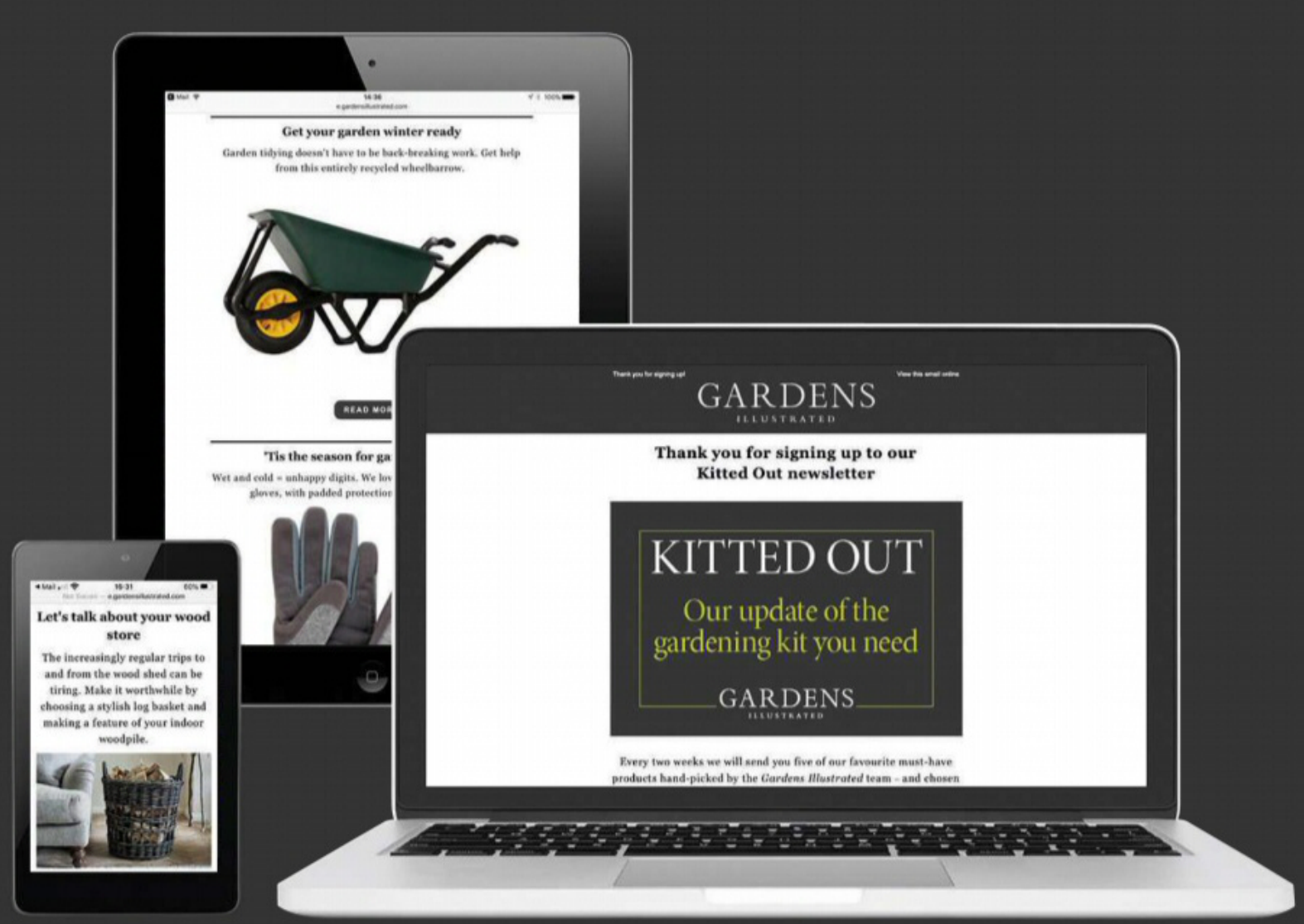

Curated fortnightly with must-have gardening products selected by *Gardens Illustrated* from top gardening brands and designers.

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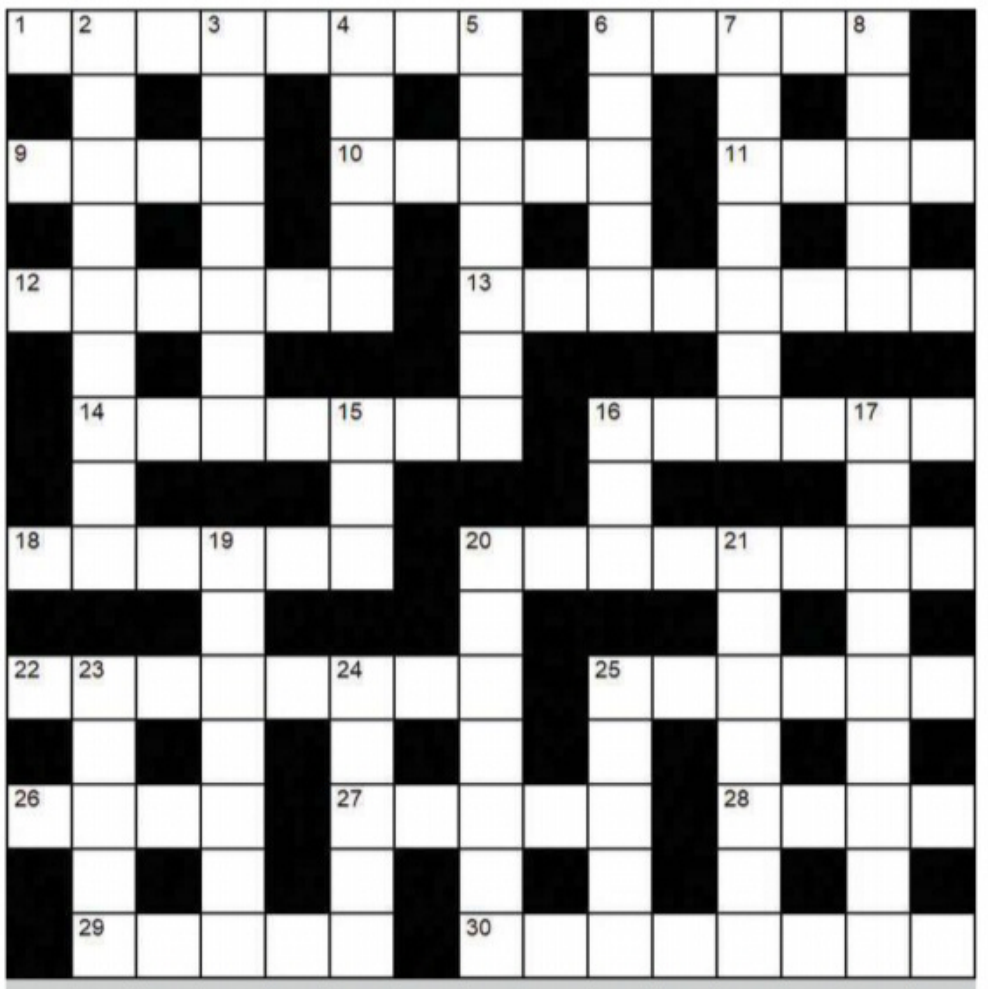
Crossword



ACROSS

1 Genus and common name of prickly shrub also called barberry (8)
6 Rhubarb stems contain ___ acid (different claim) (5)
9 Early dessert plum – found in bacopa leaves (4)
10 Fungal disease affecting buds, spread by leaf hoppers – bother! (5)
11 It can be a nuisance for gardeners but is essential for plants (4)
12 Term for eg a daffodil's trumpet – reversed in Jan or Oct (6)
13 Genus of orange-flowering plant 'Lion's Ear' – or possibly Lion's Toe! (8)
14 ___ flower is common name for *Gaillardia* – adds warmth to the bed (7)
16 Stops growth eg by pinching out (6)
18 Genus of deadnettle plant makes mum ail (6)
20 Yellow dwarf sunflower – small character from Wizard of Oz (8)
22 ___ __, or Martagon lily – headwear in Ankara? (5,3)
25 'A sheathing bract' – he spat out (6)
26 A narcissus with white/yellow flowers – sort of kale (4)
27 Lily cultivar with orange-striped white flowers – rare name in part (5)
28 Axe, etc handle – found in ditch afterwards (4)
29 Girl's name, *Magnolia* '___', with deep reddish-purple buds, opening in mid-spring (5)
30 Tulip with apricot-orange flowers – 'Fantasy'? (8)

DOWN

2 Spurge genus– has botanist, initially, in feeling of elation! (9)
3 Genus of false dittany – boat all at sea! (7)
4 Term meaning 'red' as in *Pulmonaria* ___ (5)
5 Small type of onion with bulb clusters (7)
6 An orange-flowering dahlia – inscribed on coat of arms? (5)
7 The genus of 'Lily turf' plant… yields ripe oil (7)
8 Capsicum much hotter than it sounds! (5)
15 A deep purple *Viola odorata* (initially, keep it moist) (3)
16 Is able to… cut end off raspberry stem (3)
17 Genus of red-hot poker (9)
19 Mushrooms of *Coprinus* genus – picks an assortment (7)
20 Another name for *Hydrangea macrophylla* (7)
21 Common name for plants in *Calluna* genus (7)
23 Cross-bred citrus fruits – included in drug list (5)
24 Daisies strung together for 22 yards? (5)
25 Light condition liked by eg cyclamen (5)

• Solutions to this issue's crossword will be printed in the April issue

SOLUTIONS TO THE FEBRUARY ISSUE'S CROSSWORD

Across 4 Flopped **8** Ensete **9** Bonanza **10** Isis **12** Amber **13** Snap **14** Cerasus **15** Altona **19** Runners **21** Corm **23** Drain **24** Sets **26** Exmouth **27** Indigo **29** Kabocha **30** Bangor. **Down 1** Venus **2** OBE **3** Elegans **5** Linaria **6** Pines **7** Elaeagnus **9** Babys breath **11** Straw **14** Coleonema **16** Trees **18** Redruth **20** Nandina **22** Mambo **25/17** Tiger flower **28/1 across** Dog violet.

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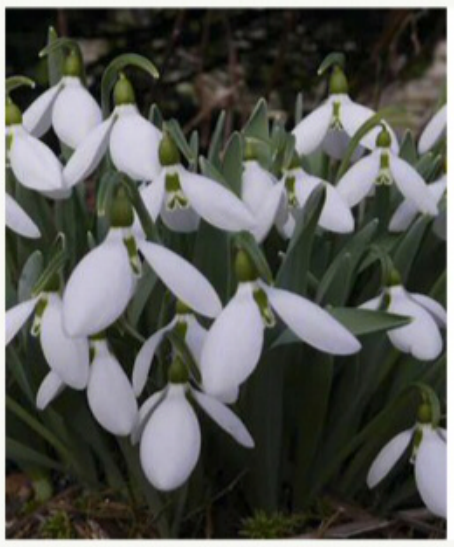
Spring nursery guide

Get inspired for the spring season with the best plant and bulb suppliers



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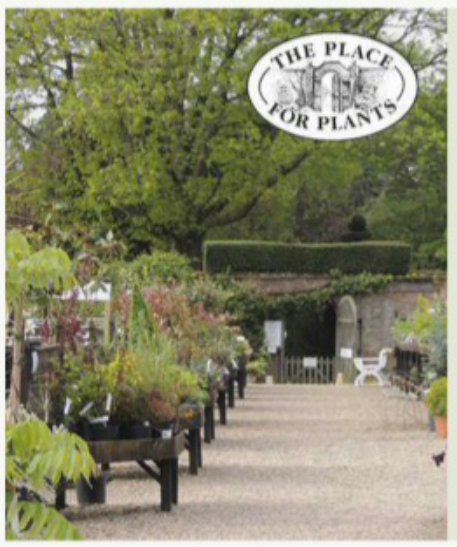

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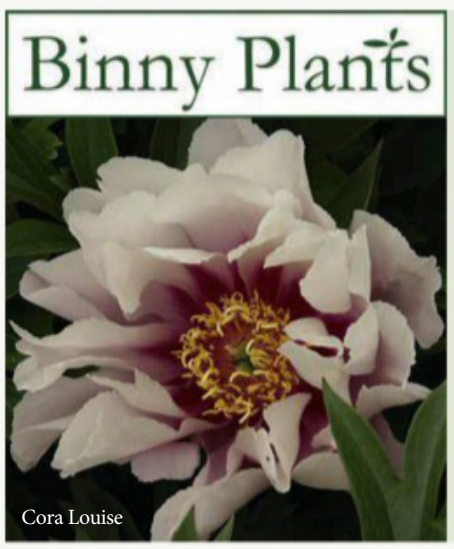

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Spring gardens to visit

As spring approaches, make time to visit this collection of glorious gardens

1 RHS ROSEMOOR

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Great Torrington, Devon EX38 8PH | 01805 626810 | rhs.org.uk/rosemoor

2 BLARNEY CASTLE

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Cork, Ireland T23 Y598 | info@blarneycastle.ie | blarneycastle.ie

3 THE BISHOP'S PALACE & GARDENS, WELLS

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Wells, Somerset BA5 2PD | 01749 988111 | bishopspalace.org.uk

4 EMMETTS GARDEN

Visit Emmetts Garden for a sea of red, pink and black tulips sitting under delicate cherry blossom in a spring display to delight the senses. Azaleas and rhododendrons start to awaken and begin flooding the North and South gardens with colour, with over 100 species to be discovered.

Sevenoaks, Kent TN14 6BA | 01732 751507 | nationaltrust.org.uk/emmetts-garden

5 CHARTWELL

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Westerham, Kent TN16 1PS | 01732 868381 | nationaltrust.org.uk/chartwell

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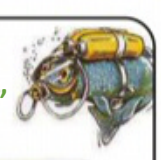

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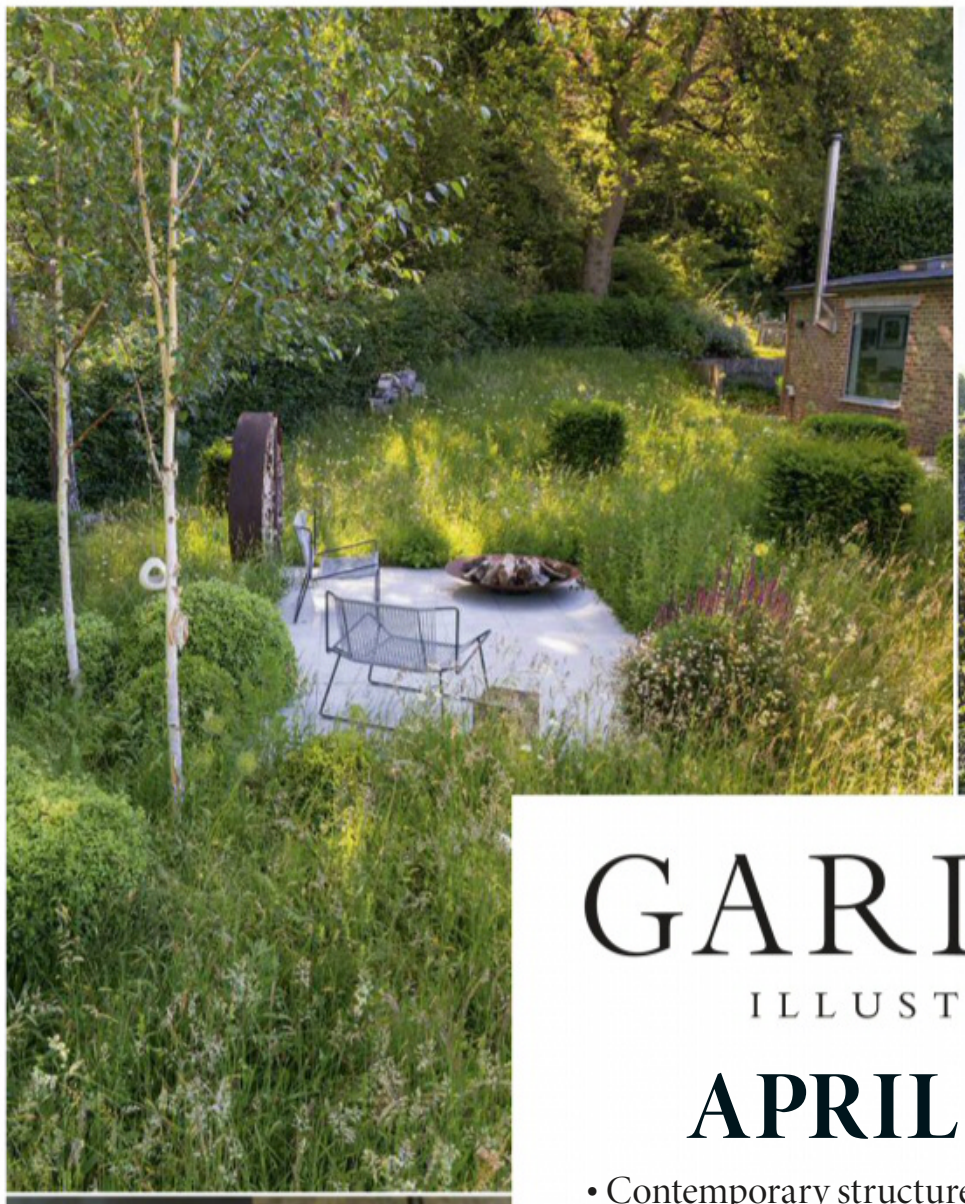

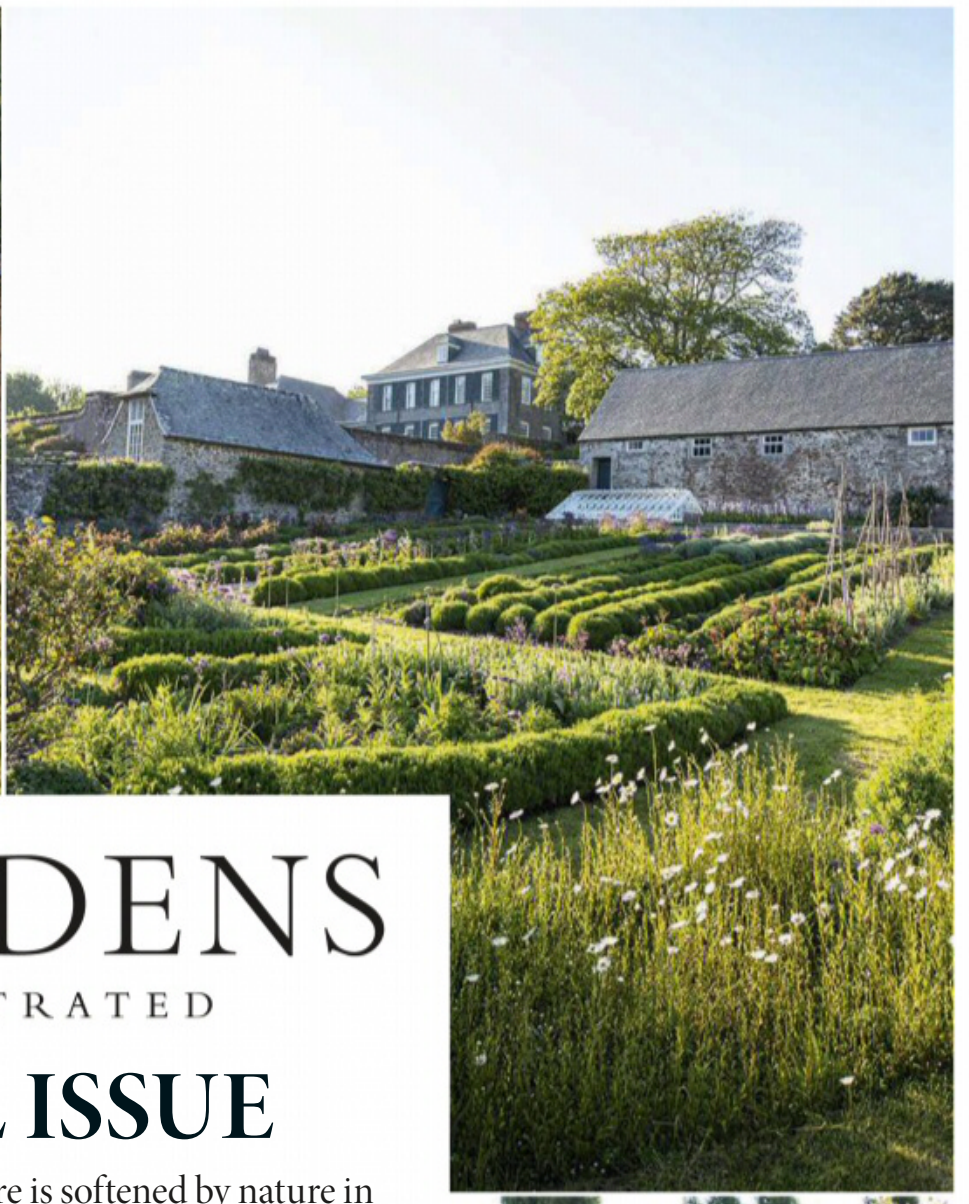

GARDENS
ILLUSTRATED

APRIL ISSUE

- Contemporary structure is softened by nature in a modern meadow garden in the heart of Kent
- A coastal garden in Devon that has become a sanctuary for butterflies, bees and other pollinating insects
- An Australian nursery that is showcasing some of the most beautiful plants for sustainable gardens
- How to create stunning displays using flower bricks
- The best, spring-flowering euphorbias

RICHARD BLOOM, CLAIRE TAKACS, JASON INGRAM

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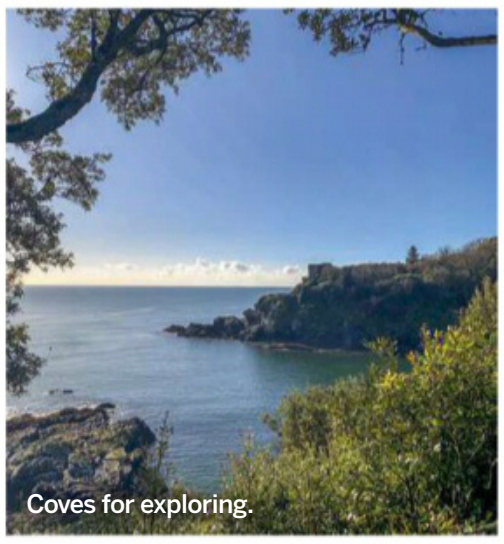
as well as WHSmith, and all good magazine retailers.

How to spend a gardener's weekend in…

Lostwithiel

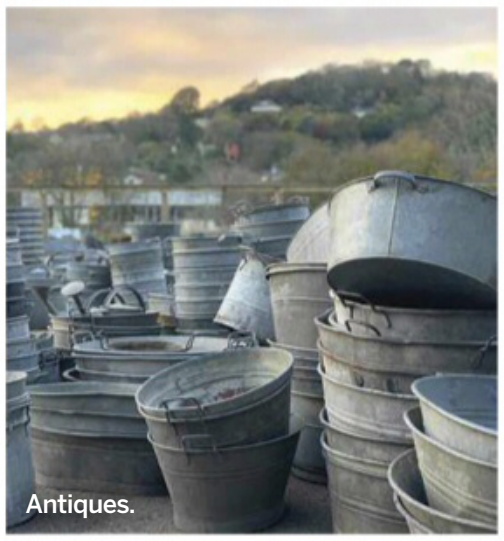
The historical gem of Cornwall's former capital, combined with the spring spectacle of richly hued rhododendrons, exotic magnolias and groves of camellias, is hard to resist


Coves for exploring.

The narrator of Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* is not the only person who dreams of returning to a special part of Cornwall. Between Bodmin Moor and the Fowey Estuary in the southeast, Lostwithiel is the perfect grid reference for exploring this county of coastline walks, cultural ghosts and bountiful flora.

History in every stone

'Lostwithiel has more to show in a small space than any Cornish town,' wrote Sir John Betjeman. Fore Street alone begins with the 14th-century Duchy Palace, and proceeds up a mainly Georgian slope, taking in **John Webb** pottery, interiors shop **Alice in Scandiland** and **Watts Trading Organic Emporium**. **Liddicoats Butchers**, next door, offers "the best pasties you will ever eat", according to Alasdair Moore, of the Lost Gardens of Heligan. Crossing the medieval bridge, **Lostwithiel Antiques Centre** brims with garden-salvage treasure.


Antiques.

Souvenirs

Best on-the-road lunch
Duchy Nursery
Best deli
Bella Mama
Best groceries
Real Food Garden, near Bodmin
Best pick-me-up
Hog's pudding from Liddicoats Butchers
Best browse
Déjà-Vu Antiques

Tea by the fire

The **Duchy of Cornwall Nursery**, just outside of town, is superlative for breakfast, lunch or tea, with **Restormel Castle** nearby. Plants are the main point, however, grown by local specialists. The florist Rebecca Stuart of the **Garden Gate Flower Company** hosts workshops at the nursery, where she also grows her flowers. The nursery is a pleasant walk along wooded back lanes, passing Gillyflower Farm – Sir Tim Smit's nascent 'daughter of Heligan' still in the planning stages.

Duchy of Cornwall Nursery.

Famous haunts

The **South Coast Path** is gloriously accessible. As the River Fowey widens into an estuary south of Lostwithiel, the harbour and extensive surroundings are a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Anyone keen to combine sea views, woodland streams and sandy coves (evoking Daphne du Maurier's Manderley), could follow the 10.5km **Gribbin Head Walk**, which circles around private Menabilly, the house that fired the author's gothic imagination.

Quay to happiness

The charming harbour town of **Fowey** is accessible by coastal path (leave the car at the top of the town) or by ferry from Boddinick. **Captain Hank's Crab and Snack Shack** is first rate, as is the **Dwelling House** for cream teas. **The Fitzroy** is run by the Friskney-Bryers, who grow produce as well as tending **North Street Kitchen**, housed in a former boat shed.

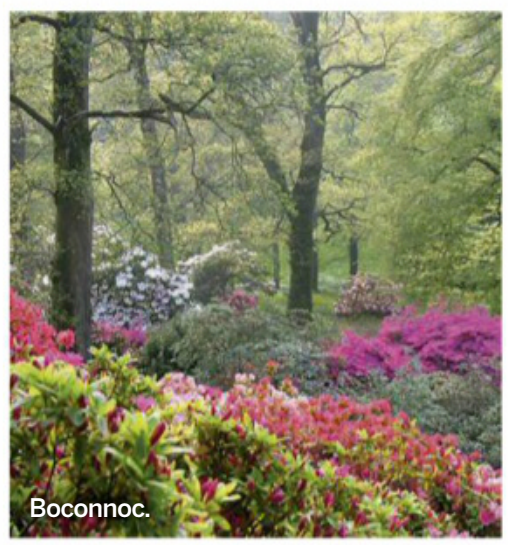
Another ferry heads to the fishing port of **Mevagissey**, with its quayside museum, terrific bookshop **Hurley's** and **Salamander** fish restaurant. Those in the know buy their fish 'still flapping' by checking Facebook. The magic words are **Fleet 51**.

Heaven and earth

You'll be spoilt for places to stay nearby. Besides the **Duchy cottages** at Restormel, there is **Boconnoc**, set in classic Cornish parkland with buildings decorated by interior designer Sarah Fortescue, some of which are in a Sir John Soane-designed stable yard. **Mena Woodwork**, whose structures have featured at RHS Chelsea and Tatton Park Flower Shows, plans to lead tours in March and April from the old sawmill at Boconnoc, when the private gardens will also open. Enchanting **Botelet** is hidden down twisting lanes, with cottages and a couple of yurts. Here, Tia Tamblyn specialises in wellbeing and hosts workshops with Garden Gate.

Heading west

The **Cornwall Garden Society Spring Show**, now at the Royal Cornwall Showground, usually takes place in March. **Caerhays Castle** has a spectacular garden, still owned by the Williams family, who introduced *Camellia* x *williamsii* and *Magnolia* 'Caerhays Surprise'. On the way, there is the lovely **Tregrehan** and the **Lost Gardens of Heligan**, home to a National Collection of pre-1920s camellias and rhododendrons.


Boconnoc.

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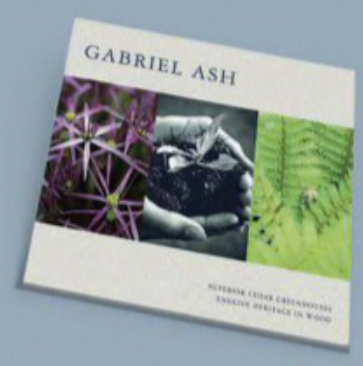

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